

**A MUTUAL CRITICAL CORRELATION OF  
BUDDHIST MEDITATION AND TRAUMA THERAPY**

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## **Abstract**

### **A Mutual Critical Correlation of Buddhist Meditation and Trauma Therapy**

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This dissertation is a Buddhist practical theological work that mutually critically correlates theory and practice from Buddhist meditation and from trauma therapy. The scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. has mainly been between proponents of the Western Vipassana Movement (WVM) and trauma therapy scholar practitioners from the fields of psychiatry, psychology, and interpersonal neurobiology. The WVM is made up of the teachers of the Insight Meditation Society (IMS), Spirit Rock meditation center, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy, and Mindful Self Compassion. The trauma therapy scholar practitioners have included both a mainstream tradition of trauma therapy with clinicians such as John Briere and Catherine Scott and a somatic trauma therapy sub-branch with clinicians such as Dan Siegel and Peter Levine. The focus of the dialogue has mainly been how WVM insight meditation (*vipassana* meditation) can be used by therapists and their clients to deal with trauma, and how the WVM can integrate principles of somatic trauma therapy into its *vipassana* meditation teachings. Thus, it has focused on empowering Buddhist-informed trauma therapists and trauma-therapy-informed WVM teachers.

The dialogue has left out the theory and practice of Goekna Vipassana (GV) despite, as this dissertation will demonstrate, significant apparent correlation between GV theory and practice and Somatic Experiencing (SE) theory and practice. The dialogue has also left out the Yogacara Buddhist psychology taught by Thich Nhat Hanh to his monastic and lay ministers in the Order of Interbeing despite apparent significant correlation between OI Yogacara psychology and body-centered relational depth psychology. The dialogue has also not sought to empower

Buddhist ministers to develop Buddhist theory and practice to recognize and respond to trauma on behalf of Buddhist ministers.

This dissertation uses a theoretical framework that distinguishes between an early Buddhist yogic mode of knowledge production, a later Buddhist scholastic mode of knowledge production, and a modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production to mutually critically correlate a) theory and practice from early Buddhist teachings on the four establishments of mindfulness, b) later Buddhist scholastic teachings on the four establishments of mindfulness and on Yogacara psychology, and c) modern scientific scholastic theory and practice on trauma therapy. It demonstrates that early Buddhist teachings on the four establishments of mindfulness contextualized within the teachings on the links of dependent origination can be combined with later Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses to create a relational Buddhist psychology that includes a somatic trauma counseling technique. It argues that such an integrated theory and practice is in keeping with a best practice in trauma therapy that calls for a relational psychology combined with a somatic trauma therapy technique.

Core texts from GV and SE theory and practice are mutually critically correlated to develop a Buddhist approach to somatic trauma counseling. Phenomenological interviews of six OI psychotherapists are analyzed to develop a Buddhist body-centered and relational approach to trauma counseling. These two Buddhist approaches are combined in a prototypical model of Buddhist counseling that uses Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) as a contemplative matrix for the application of Buddhist theory and practice on trauma counseling

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## *Abbreviations, List of Figures, and Formatting Note*

### **Abbreviations of Traditions Discussed**

GV = Goenka Vipassana

OI = Order of Interbeing

SE = Somatic Experiencing

WVM = Western Vipassana Movement

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### **Formatting Note**

Italicized translations of Buddhist terms are in Pali unless otherwise specified.

For people who have died, dates of persons' birth and death are given after their name when first mentioned. For people still alive at the time of this writing, no dates are given.

## *Chapter One: Introduction*

### **Statement of the Problem**

The scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. has mainly focused on the understanding of Buddhist *vipassana* meditation (insight meditation) put forward by teachers from the Insight Meditation Society and Spirit Rock meditation center in conversation with the understanding of trauma therapy put forward by scholars and clinicians in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and neuroscience. The dialogue has not yet focused on the understanding of *vipassana* meditation put forward by the tradition of S.N. Goenka (1924-2012) despite apparent significant correlation between Goenka *vipassana* and Somatic Experiencing, a somatic trauma therapy developed by trauma researcher and clinician Peter Levine. The dialogue has also not yet focused on Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on the eight consciousnesses despite apparent significant correlation between those teachings and common tenets of trauma therapy theory and practice. In addition, the dialogue has not yet focused on how Buddhist ministers could develop Buddhist trauma counseling as religious workers. Instead, it has focused mainly on how psychotherapists can integrate *vipassana* meditation into trauma therapy as medical workers.

### **Statement of the Thesis**

A mutual critical correlation of a) the theories and practices of Goenka *vipassana* with Somatic Experiencing, and of b) Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on the eight consciousnesses—as understood by six psychotherapists in his Order of Interbeing—with common tenets from trauma therapy theory and practice, can expand the dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in

the U.S. and provide a basis for the development of Buddhist trauma counseling to be used by Buddhist ministers.

## Discussion of the Problem

The understanding of what Buddhist meditation is in the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. has mainly been the understanding of what insight meditation (i.e., *vipassana* meditation) is as taught by Dharma teachers from the Insight Meditation Society (IMS) in Barre Massachusetts and the Spirit Rock meditation center in Marin County, California.<sup>1</sup> The understanding of what secular mindfulness practice is in the dialogue has mainly been the understanding put forward by teachers of secular spinoffs from IMS and Spirit Rock, e.g., Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), and Mindful Self Compassion (MSC).<sup>2</sup> In his doctoral thesis comparing insight meditation from IMS and Spirit Rock with Somatic Experiencing, trauma professional David Treleaven has referred collectively to the teachers and practitioners of IMS, Spirit Rock, and its secular mindfulness spinoffs as the “Western Vipassana Movement” (“WVM”).<sup>3</sup> The focus of the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. has mainly been to put the WVM’s understanding of *vipassana* meditation and secular mindfulness practice

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<sup>1</sup> Victoria M. Follette et al., eds., *Mindfulness-Oriented Interventions for Trauma: Integrating Contemplative Practices* (New York: Guilford Press, 2015); Jane Compson, “Meditation, Trauma and Suffering in Silence: Raising Questions about How Meditation Is Taught and Practiced in Western Contexts in the Light of a Contemporary Trauma Resiliency Model,” *Contemporary Buddhism* 15, no. 2 (July 3, 2014): 274–97; David Allan Treleaven, “Meditation and Trauma: A Hermeneutic Study of Western Vipassana Practice through the Perspective of Somatic Experiencing” (PhD diss., California Institute of Integral Studies, 2012), ProQuest; Peter Payne, Peter A. Levine, and Mardi A. Crane-Godreau, “Somatic Experiencing: Using Interoception and Proprioception as Core Elements of Trauma Therapy,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 6 (2015); John N. Briere and Catherine Scott, *Principles of Trauma Therapy: A Guide to Symptoms, Evaluation, and Treatment* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014), chap. 10; Mark Epstein, *The Trauma of Everyday Life* (New York: Penguin Books, 2014); Ann Gleig, *American Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), chap. 4, Kindle.

<sup>2</sup> Follette et al., *Mindfulness-Oriented Interventions for Trauma*.

<sup>3</sup> Treleaven, “Meditation and Trauma,” 26.

into conversation with the understanding of what trauma is and how to respond to it from researchers and clinicians grounded in Western psychiatry/psychology and or interpersonal neurobiology.

The participants of the dialogue have tended to be one or a combination of the following types of people: IMS and Spirit Rock Dharma teachers; secular mindfulness professionals from one of IMS and Spirit Rock's secular spinoffs; psychotherapists informed by IMS and Spirit Rock teachings on Buddhist meditation; psychotherapists using mindfulness-informed psychotherapies; and psychotherapists using a somatic trauma therapy approach based on research into interpersonal neurobiology.<sup>4</sup> One of the main goals of the dialogue has been to empower psychotherapists to use mindfulness-based interventions in therapy sessions to help their clients recover from trauma. Another goal has been to empower WVM teachers to integrate somatic trauma therapy theory and practice into their teaching of Buddhist *vipassana* meditation and or secular mindfulness practice.

The understanding of *vipassana* meditation held by the WVM is based on an existential humanist interpretation of the teachings of the Burmese scholar-monk and meditation teacher Mahasi Sayadaw (1904-1982). Mahasi Sayadaw based his *vipassana* meditation teachings on the Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (MN:10, *Satipatthana Sutta*) and the Greater Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (DN:22, *Mahsatipatthana Sutta*) from the Pali Canon.<sup>5</sup> He taught the practice of the four establishments of mindfulness (*satipatthana*) as being: (1) mindfulness of the body (*kaya*), (2) mindfulness of feelings

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<sup>4</sup> Follette et al., *Mindfulness-Oriented Interventions for Trauma*; Briere and Scott, *Principles of Trauma Therapy*; Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau, "Somatic Experiencing"; Epstein, *The Trauma of Everyday Life*.

<sup>5</sup> Ajhan Sujato, trans., "Middle Discourses 10: Mindfulness Meditation," *Satipatthānasutta*, SuttaCentral, accessed October 21, 2020, <https://suttacentral.net/mn10/en/sujato>; Ajhan Sujato, trans., "Long Discourses 22: The Longer Discourse on Mindfulness Meditation," *Mahāsātipatṭhānasutta*, SuttaCentral, accessed October 3, 2020, <https://suttacentral.net/dn22/en/sujato>.

(*vedana*), (3) mindfulness of the mind (*citta*), and (4) mindfulness of the teachings (*Dhamma*) on the three marks of existence (*tilakkhana*).<sup>6</sup> The Theravada teachings on the three marks of existence state that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) when attached to, and not self (*anatta*).<sup>7</sup> Mahasi *vipassana* practice consists of mindfulness of breathing in the abdomen, cognitively labeling the in-breath and out-breath, and cognitively labeling whatever physical, emotional, or mental phenomena arises in one's awareness.<sup>8</sup> As one contemplates these phenomena one is taught to reflect on their impermanent, suffering, and no-self nature in order to attain liberating insight.<sup>9</sup>

The goal of Mahasi *vipassana* is to attain insight into the impermanent, suffering, and no-self nature of all conditioned phenomena in order to trigger an experience of nirvana (Pali *nibbana*) which weakens or destroys the mental formations (*sankharas* i.e., habit energies) that cause rebirth.<sup>10</sup> The teachers of IMS and Spirit Rock have maintained the Mahasi *vipassana* teachings on *satipatthana* as their primary contemplative structure for teaching insight meditation practice.<sup>11</sup> But they have tended to substitute the transcendent worldview that traditionally goes with Mahasi *vipassana* practice in Burma with the scientific materialist worldview that predominates the fields of Western psychology, psychiatry, and neuroscience in the U.S. Instead of using the teachings on the three marks of existence to seek liberation from rebirth, the WVM uses those teachings to attain a radical acceptance of the present moment and

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<sup>6</sup> Mahasi Sayadaw, *Practical Insight Meditation: Basic and Progressive Stages* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1991), 2, 15, 21-23, 46. First published 1971.

<sup>7</sup> "Trilaksana," in *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, eds. Robert E. Buswell and Donald S. Lopez, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 923.

<sup>8</sup> Sayadaw, *Practical Insight Meditation*, 1-14.

<sup>9</sup> Sayadaw, 21-23.

<sup>10</sup> Sayadaw, 26,36.

<sup>11</sup> Treleaven, "Meditation and Trauma," 67-70.

existential insight into the nature of reality from the perspective of scientific materialism.<sup>12</sup> The scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. has imported this WVM understanding of *satipatthana* from IMS and Spirit Rock. As a result, the dialogue tends to envision Buddhist meditation practice as being made up of mindfulness of the body, emotions, and thoughts within an existential humanist interpretation of the teachings on impermanence, suffering, and no self.

The core theory behind *vipassana* meditation as taught by S.N. Goenka (Goenka Vipassana, GV) is the teachings on the links (*nidana*) of dependent origination (*paticca samuppada*).<sup>13</sup> The teachings on the links of dependent origination in Theravada Buddhism are seen to describe the mechanics of rebirth. A common formulation of the links in the Pali Canon is a 12 link chain that is often interpreted as describing the process of rebirth over three lifetimes.<sup>14</sup> The 12 links are, (1) ignorance (*avijja*), (2) volition (*sankhara*), (3) consciousness (*vinnana*), (4) mind-and-body (*nama-rupa*), (5) the six sense-bases (*salayatana*), (6) contact (*phassa*), (7) sensation (*vedana*), (8) craving (*tanha*), (9) grasping (*upadana*), (10) becoming (*bhava*), (11) birth (*jati*), (12) old age and death (*jara-marana*). Each link is seen as the result of the previous link and the cause of the subsequent link.<sup>15</sup> GV practice focuses primarily on five links that make up links six through ten in the 12-link chain.<sup>16</sup> Those links are sensory/mental contact (*phassa*), sensation (*vedana*), craving (*tanha*), grasping (*upadana*), and becoming

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<sup>12</sup> Bodhi, "The Transformations of Mindfulness," in *Handbook of Mindfulness: Culture, Context, and Social Engagement*, ed. Adam Burke, David Forbes, and Ronald Purser (Cham: Springer, 2016), 13.

<sup>13</sup> S. N. Goenka, *Discourse Summaries* (Seattle, WA: Pariyatti Publishing, 2000), 43-50.

<sup>14</sup> Bodhi, ed., *The Great Discourse on Causation: The Mahānidāna Sutta and Its Commentaries* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> "Maha-Nidana Sutta: The Great Causes Discourse," accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.15.0.than.html>.

In the three-lifetime understanding, the past life is links one and two, the present life is links three through nine, the future life is links ten through twelve.

<sup>16</sup> Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*, 38-44.

(*bhava*). These links can be seen as a repeating cycle of links that a person keeps experiencing over and over again within their present lifetime. This dissertation will refer to these five links as “the five links of dependent origination.”

GV practice consists of mindfulness of breathing at the nose and upper lip, and a bodyscan practice where one practices mindfulness of body sensations throughout the body.<sup>17</sup> The primary focus of attention is on body sensation (*vedana*) within the context of the five links of dependent origination.<sup>18</sup> When an emotional reaction (*sankhara*) of craving or aversion arises from a pleasant or unpleasant body sensation respectively, one is taught to let go of focusing attention on the emotion and to return one’s attention back to body sensation.<sup>19</sup> Aversion is seen as the craving to get rid of something and so is seen as another form of the link of craving, the third of the five links. The goal of GV is to cultivate awareness of and equanimity towards body sensation so as to be able to abandon certain deeply rooted habit energies (*sankharas*) of ignorance, craving, and aversion that cause rebirth.<sup>20</sup> Instead of seeking the Mahasi *vipassana* goal of cognitive insight into the three marks of existence to trigger nirvana, GV seeks somatic release from the process of rebirth through working with sensation and reactive emotion in the context of the links of dependent origination.

The theory and practice of GV bears a striking resemblance to the theory and practice of Somatic Experiencing (SE). The core theory behind SE is the polyvagal theory developed by psychiatrist and neuroscientist Stephen Porges in close collaboration with Levine’s own research

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<sup>17</sup> dhamma.org, “Guidelines For Practicing Vipassana Meditation,” Vipassana Meditation As taught by S.N. Goenka in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, accessed December 28, 2020, <https://www.dhamma.org/en/osguide>.

<sup>18</sup> GV translates the Pali term *vedana* as “sensation” whereas the WVM translates it as “feeling” or “emotion.” This key distinction will be discussed in more detail in the literature review chapter.

<sup>19</sup> Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*, 36.

<sup>20</sup> Goenka, 115, 118.

and development of SE.<sup>21</sup> Polyvagal theory identifies three instinctual drives in humans to respond to threat, namely social engagement, fight or flight, and immobility.<sup>22</sup> According to Levine, trauma is the result of the immobility response in a person not being able to complete itself after it has been engaged in response to a perceived threat.<sup>23</sup> When the immobility response tries to complete itself, the person is overwhelmed by intense body sensations and fear that make the person feel like he/she/they is/are going to die. He/she/they is/are also overwhelmed by intense sensations and emotions of rage and fear that arise with the fight or flight response which can become activated as part of the immobility response trying to complete itself.

The core of SE practice consists of: the therapist supporting the client to establish stability of body and mind through focusing on neutral to pleasant sensations; and then to metabolize trauma through alternating awareness between pleasant and unpleasant sensations, and by taking in the unpleasant sensations in small doses. Focusing attention on neutral and pleasant sensations is known as “resourcing.”<sup>24</sup> Alternating attention between pleasant and unpleasant sensations is known as “pendulation.”<sup>25</sup> Only taking in small doses of unpleasant sensation is known as “titration.”<sup>26</sup> Resourcing, pendulation, and titration allow the immobility response to safely complete itself which results in the alleviation of PTSD. The goal of SE is thus the recovery from trauma through somatic release. A key element of SE is for the client to be able to distinguish between sensation and emotion arising from sensation, and then for the client to be able to shift the focus of attention from emotion back to sensation. Thus, SE theory and

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<sup>21</sup> Peter A. Levine, “Polyvagal Theory and Trauma,” in *Clinical Applications of the Polyvagal Theory: The Emergence of Polyvagal-Informed Therapies*, ed. Deb Dana and Stephen Porges (New York: Norton, 2018), 3–26.

<sup>22</sup> Levine, 14–15.

<sup>23</sup> Peter A. Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*, (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2010), 58.

<sup>24</sup> Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau, “Somatic Experiencing,” 8.

<sup>25</sup> Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau, 8, 10.

<sup>26</sup> Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau, 8, 10.

practice is very similar to GV theory and practice. This dissertation will argue that the main difference between GV and SE is not in their essential theory and practice but in their social contexts and goals of practice. With SE the social context is therapy sessions. With GV it is meditation retreats. With SE the goal is recovering from trauma. With GV it is greater welfare and happiness in the present life, favorable rebirth, and liberation from rebirth.

Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022), the Vietnamese Thiền (Zen) monk who founded the Order of Interbeing (OI) for lay and monastic students, taught an existential humanist interpretation of both Theravada and Mahayana teachings. Like IMS and Spirit Rock, he used the *satipatthana* teachings as a contemplative structure to teach the practice of mindfulness of the body (*kaya*), feelings (*vedana*), and thoughts (*citta*) as they spontaneously arise in one's awareness.<sup>27</sup> But instead of using the Theravada teachings on the three marks of existence for the fourth establishment (*dhamma*), he used the Mahayana Madhyamika teachings on emptiness (Sanskrit *Shunyata*).<sup>28</sup> Those teachings posit that all conditioned phenomena are empty of a separate self and that they interdependently co-arise with each other.

Like IMS and Spirit Rock, Thich Nhat Hanh tended to teach that the goal of meditation practice was a radical acceptance of the present moment and existential insight into the nature of reality.<sup>29</sup> Like IMS and Spirit Rock, he did not tend to teach about the traditional Buddhist goals

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<sup>27</sup> The following books are commentaries by Thich Nhat Hanh on Theravada texts on the four establishments of mindfulness. Thich Nhat Hanh, *Breathe! You Are Alive: Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1996); Thich Nhat Hanh, *Transformation and Healing: Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2002); Thich Nhat Hanh, *Path of Emancipation* (Grass Valley, CA: Full Circle, 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Hanh, *Breathe! You Are Alive*, 67-71; Hanh, *Path of Emancipation*, chapter 11.

<sup>29</sup> Hanh, *Breathe! You Are Alive*, 66-73; Hanh, *Transformation and Healing*, 104-110; Hanh, *Path of Emancipation*, 166-167; Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra* (Berkeley, Calif: Parallax Press, 2009), 15-29.

of favorable rebirth and liberation from rebirth.<sup>30</sup> Unlike IMS and Spirit Rock, Thich Nhat Hanh used the Mahayana Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses to help explain mindfulness practice, both for *intra*-personal practice and for *inter*-personal practice.<sup>31</sup> According to those Yogacara teachings, a person's experience of consciousness can be mapped out into eight phenomenological territories of experience.<sup>32</sup> There are the five sense consciousnesses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. There is the mind consciousness (Skt *manovijñāna*) which is a person's conscious awareness coming into contact with mental phenomena. There is the afflicted consciousness (Skt *kilesavijñāna*) which a person experiences as identification with and attachment to the body and mind as self and the imputation of distinct external entities onto external phenomena. Finally, there is the store consciousness (Skt *ālayavijñāna*) which is the basis from which all the other seven consciousnesses manifest and in which they are maintained.

Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on the eight consciousnesses hinged upon two different uses of the term "mental formation," (Pali *sankhara* Skt *samskara*). In the broadest sense he referred to a mental formation as a "formation" (i.e., a conditioned phenomenon) that was empty of a separate self and that was interdependent with all other conditioned phenomena. In a narrower sense he referred to a mental formation as an emotion. According to Thich Nhat Hanh, "anything made from another element is a 'formation.' A flower is a formation because it is made from sunshine, clouds, seeds, soil, minerals, gardeners, and so on. Fear is also a formation,

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<sup>30</sup> I base this assertion on the hundreds of Dharma talks I heard Thich Nhat Hanh give while training at his monasteries from 1998-2004, his informal teachings to monastics during that time, and my reading of his major texts.

<sup>31</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching: Transforming Suffering into Peace, Joy, and Liberation* (New York: Harmony, 2015), 18, 206; Thich Nhat Hanh, *Understanding Our Mind: 51 Verses on Buddhist Psychology* (Berkeley CA: Parallax Press, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, *The Five Buddha Families and the Eight Consciousnesses* (Richmond, British Columbia: Namo Buddha Publications, 2013), chap. 2.

a mental formation.”<sup>33</sup> He taught that a person was made up of the five aggregates of form (body), feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and sensory/mental consciousnesses. He taught that all five aggregates were “formations” that interdependently arose from a person’s store consciousness.<sup>34</sup>

When explaining the narrower definition of the term “mental formation” as the fourth of the five aggregates, he commonly spoke of them as emotions or habit energies that could be wholesome or unwholesome.<sup>35</sup> He taught that they were stored as seeds (Skt *bija*) in a person’s store consciousness.<sup>36</sup> He taught that the purpose of meditation was to cultivate wholesome mental formations and to embrace and transform unwholesome mental formations with wholesome mental formations.<sup>37</sup> He taught that a practitioner should first practice stopping (Skt *shamatha*) by watering the positive seeds in the store consciousness to establish stability of body and mind before looking deeply (Skt *vipashyana*) into the negative seeds in the store consciousness.<sup>38</sup>

Thich Nhat Hanh taught this cultivation practice as a practice one could do as an individual in meditation (i.e., *intra*-personal practice) but also as a practice that a Dharma teacher, family member, friend, or therapist could guide another person to do as a dialogue-based mindfulness practice (i.e., *inter*-personal practice). His teaching that a person should become competent in watering positive seeds first before trying to embrace and transform negative seeds is similar to the common tenet in trauma therapy that a person should go through a stage of establishing safety and stability first before trying to bring up and process traumatic memories.

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<sup>33</sup> Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*, 179.

<sup>34</sup> Hanh, 180.

<sup>35</sup> Hanh, 179-180.

<sup>36</sup> Hanh, 179-180.

<sup>37</sup> Hanh, chap. 14.

<sup>38</sup> Hanh, *Path of Emancipation*, 81-83.

His Yogacara teaching on how seeds from the store consciousness can manifest in a person's conscious awareness (i.e., mind consciousness) as their body, body sensation, emotion, cognitive perception, and or thoughts provides a comprehensive phenomenological map of human experience. It operates in a similar fashion to how standard trauma therapy theory maps implicit and explicit memory. According to standard trauma therapy theory, an implicit memory of a traumatic event can manifest as sensation and or emotion without a cognitive narrative associated with it.<sup>39</sup> An explicit memory is a memory that does include a cognitive narrative.

### **Discussion of the Thesis**

A mutual critical correlation of texts on the theory and practice of Goenka *vipassana* with texts on the theory and practice of Somatic Experiencing can reveal significant correlations between those two traditions. Both speak of being caught in a negative cycle in which a person is overwhelmed by intense body sensation and reactive emotion. Both teach a practice of developing awareness of and equanimity towards body sensation so as to be able to release reactive emotions and metabolize suffering stored in the body and mind. The main difference between them is not in their essential theory and practice but in their social context of practice, their goal of practice, and their worldview within which theory and practice takes place. A mutual critical correlation between their theory and practice can result in a basis to develop an integrated theory and practice of Buddhist meditation and trauma therapy that can be used by Buddhist ministers as "Buddhist counseling."

Phenomenological interviews of six psychotherapists in the Thich Nhat Hanh's Order of Interbeing that focus on their experience of how they integrate his Buddhist meditation teachings

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<sup>39</sup> Elaine Miller-Karas, *Building Resilience to Trauma: The Trauma and Community Resiliency Models* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 22.

with the theory and practice of trauma therapy can reveal correlations between the theory and practice of OI meditation and trauma therapy. In particular, the OI psychotherapists' use of Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses can be mutually critically correlated with how they use trauma therapy theory and practice to define what trauma is, and to express the need to take a staged approach to healing from trauma. A phenomenological exploration of their experience can also reveal how they use an integrated theory and practice of Buddhism and trauma therapy in the social contexts of therapy sessions, Buddhist congregational practice, and in teaching mediation. Thus, a mutual critical correlation of Order of Interbeing meditation teachings with trauma therapy theory and practice can further serve as a basis to develop an integrated theory and practice of Buddhist meditation and trauma therapy that can be used by Buddhist ministers in Buddhist counseling.

### **Review of Closely Related Literature**

As mentioned above, trauma scholar and professional David Treleaven has compared the theory and practice of WVM *vipassana* meditation as taught by IMS and Spirit Rock teachers with the theory and practice of SE in his doctoral dissertation. According to Treleaven, WVM *vipassana* meditation teachings are based on “two major frameworks,[...] the four foundations of mindfulness—body, feelings, mind, and *Dharma*—and four principles of mindful transformation—recognition, acceptance, investigation, and nonidentification.”<sup>40</sup> One is taught to be mindful of sensations, feelings, and thoughts as they spontaneously arise in one's awareness. When painful sensations and emotions arise, one is taught to recognize them, accept them, investigate them, and contemplate their no-self nature.

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<sup>40</sup> Treleaven, “Meditation and Trauma,” 67.

According to Treleaven, “A key premise [Jack] Kornfield and other WMV teachers work from is that mindful attention necessarily leads to change, a shift often conceptualized as a positive, transformative step in case examples.”<sup>41</sup> Based on SE theory and practice Treleaven argues that for people with trauma, mindfulness of body sensations and emotions may lead to their trauma being reactivated and to their nervous systems becoming overwhelmed with symptoms of hyperarousal, hypoarousal, and or dissociation.<sup>42</sup> Treleaven argues that if one is overwhelmed by traumatic material when trying to practice mindfulness of painful sensations and emotions, one may become retraumatized instead of experiencing a positive shift. He argues that WVM teaching should integrate the psychobiological understanding of trauma from SE so that teachers and retreatants can better recognize when retreatants are practicing within the “window of tolerance” versus being overwhelmed and retraumatized. According to Treleaven, one’s window of tolerance, or optimal level of arousal, is the spectrum by which information can be integrated and not overwhelm the nervous system.”<sup>43</sup>

By comparing WVM teachings on mindfulness of body sensations with in-depth SE teachings on body sensations, he points out the insufficiency of the WVM teachings when it comes to trauma and how to work with sensations safely and effectively. To summarize, a core critique Treleaven makes of WVM meditation teachings is that they lack the body-wisdom necessary to recognize when a person is overwhelmed by trauma, and they lack the body-centered practices necessary to respond to trauma. He recommends that the WVM integrate SE theory and practice into its *vipassana* meditation teacher training to increase the WVM’s body-wisdom and its repertoire of practices when it comes to trauma.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Treleaven, 86.

<sup>42</sup> Treleaven, 101.

<sup>43</sup> Treleaven, 101.

<sup>44</sup> Treleaven, 148.

Another core critique Treleaven makes of the WVM is that the silent retreats held at IMS and Spirit Rock, with their limited access to the teacher, lacks the sufficient level of social engagement necessary to prevent or downregulate activation of trauma in traumatized retreatants. Treleaven points out that according to polyvagal theory, activation of the social engagement drive between two people through eye contact, conversation, and attunement can prevent the fight-or-flight drive and the immobility drive from being activated.<sup>45</sup> He points out that SE practitioners make use of the social engagement drive in therapy sessions to support clients in the practices of resourcing, pendulation, and titration. He posits that the isolation—i.e., the lack of social engagement—experienced by retreatants in WVM retreats can result in traumatized retreatants becoming re-traumatized. Based on SE theory and practice around the social engagement drive, he recommends that WVM retreats have a licensed clinician trained in somatic trauma therapy on hand to provide the lacking social engagement retreatants may need.<sup>46</sup> To summarize Treleaven's second core critique of the WVM is that WVM silent retreats lack the social context necessary to make use of trauma-informed social engagement to prevent or downregulate the activation of trauma.

I am in agreement with Treleaven's critiques of the WVM and his recommendations for WVM modification. In this dissertation, instead of comparing WVM teachings on *vipassana* meditation with SE, I will compare GV teachings on *vipassana* meditation with SE. Instead of positing that the WVM teachings on *satipatthana* and the four principles of mindful transformation are insufficient in their ability to recognize and respond to trauma, I will posit that the GV teachings on the links of dependent origination, mindfulness of breathing, and the bodyscan could, under the right circumstances, be sufficient in their ability to recognize and

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<sup>45</sup> Treleaven, 102-104.

<sup>46</sup> Treleaven, 144.

respond to trauma. Instead of positing that SE theory and practice is a necessary and missing supplement to WVM theory and practice when it comes to recognizing and responding to trauma, I will posit that SE theory and practice can reveal how already existing GV theory and practice could be adapted to recognize and respond to trauma. Instead of positing that a licensed mental health clinician trained in somatic trauma therapy is necessary to provide the trauma-informed social engagement needed to recognize and respond to trauma, I will posit that it might be possible for a Buddhist minister, trained in trauma-therapy-informed GV theory and practice, to provide the social engagement needed to recognize and respond to trauma. Through the interviews with the six OI psychotherapists that this dissertation has conducted, potential social contexts that Buddhist spiritual care for trauma could be provided in such as weekly sanghas (congregations), weekly meditation classes, residential sanghas (communities), temples, and monasteries will be explored.

The discussion of closely related literature will now turn to the work of Buddhist trauma theoreticians David Lewis and Deborah Rozelle. Rozelle is also a trauma clinician who uses the somatic trauma therapy approach of Eye Motion Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR). Lewis and Rozelle have made the only attempt so far in the dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. to significantly theorize about what trauma is using non-WVM Buddhist theory. In other words, they do not use the WVM's existential humanist interpretation of Mahasi *vipassana* teachings on *satipatthana* to discuss what trauma is and how to respond to it. The core Buddhist theory they make use of is the teaching on emptiness as taught within the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>47</sup> Those teachings posit that all phenomena are empty of a

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<sup>47</sup> The four main schools of Buddhism in Tibet are the Gelugpa, the Kagyu, the Sakya, and the Nyingma. The Gelugpa school specializes in the Madhyamika (middle way) teachings on emptiness first put forward by the Indian scholar monk Nagarjuna (150-250AD). Although Lewis and Rozelle do not tend to explicitly reference Gelugpa

separate self and that they interdependently co-arise. In describing those teachings Lewis and Rozelle state,

According to Buddhism we pervasively misapprehend the true nature of the self, and of all things in the world, as separate, noninterdependent, permanent entities, unconnected with and actually in opposition to one another, when in fact they are intertwined in an everchanging, interdependent web of cause and effect.<sup>48</sup>

Lewis and Rozelle state that the goal of Buddhist meditation practice is to cut through the misapprehension of identifying with the body and mind as self so as to be liberated from samsara. They explicitly define samsara in the context of rebirth.<sup>49</sup> They make use of Buddhist teachings, common to both Theravada and Mahayana traditions, that categorize suffering into three kinds of phenomenological experience as a theoretical framework to compare Buddhist and Western psychology with. They use that framework to compare the misapprehension at the root of samsara with the misapprehension at the root of trauma.<sup>50</sup>

According to Lewis and Rozelle, the first of the three kinds of suffering is the “*suffering of suffering*” (*dukkha dukkha*) which is physical and emotional pain.<sup>51</sup> Lewis and Rozelle call this “*overt suffering*.”<sup>52</sup> The second kind is the “*suffering of change*” (*viparinama dukkha*) which is the suffering inherent in pleasant experiences because they will inevitably change.<sup>53</sup> Lewis and Rozelle call this “*subtle suffering*.”<sup>54</sup> The third kind is the “*suffering of conditioned existence*”

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teachers when discussing emptiness, based on private communications between Lewis and myself I know that is the primary source they draw from when discussing emptiness.

<sup>48</sup> David Lewis and Deborah Rozelle, “Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing: A New Model of Post Traumatic Stress Treatment,” in *Mindfulness Oriented Interventions for Trauma: Integrating the Contemplative Practices*, ed. John Briere, Victoria Follette, and Deborah Rozelle (New York: The Guilford Press, 2014), 104-105.

<sup>49</sup> Deborah Rozelle and David Lewis, “PTSD and Buddhism: An Analogical Mapping Model” (Mind and Life International Symposium for Contemplative Studies, Boston, MA, October 31, 2014) slide 25; David J. Lewis and Deborah Rozelle, “Mindfulness-Based Interventions: Clinical Psychology, Buddhadharma, or Both? A Wisdom Perspective,” in *Handbook of Mindfulness: Culture, Context, and Social Engagement*, ed. Adam Burke, David Forbes, and Ronald E. Purser (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 243–68.

<sup>50</sup> “*dukkha*” (suffering), *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, Buswell and Lopez, 270-271.

<sup>51</sup> Lewis and Rozelle, “Mindfulness-Based Interventions,” 248.

<sup>52</sup> Lewis and Rozelle, 248.

<sup>53</sup> Lewis and Rozelle, 249.

<sup>54</sup> Lewis and Rozelle, 249.

(*sankhara dukkha*) which is the suffering caused by identification with and attachment to the body and mind as self which causes rebirth, i.e., *samsara*.<sup>55</sup> Lewis and Rozelle call this “*hidden suffering*” because it is undetectable unless one cultivates a meditation practice that is deep enough and sensitive enough to detect it.<sup>56</sup> They map overt and subtle suffering as being within what they call the “*everyday/psychological realm*” of human experience.<sup>57</sup> They map hidden suffering as being within what they call the “*radical/transcendental realm*” of human experience.<sup>58</sup> They map PTSD as a more intense form of overt suffering.<sup>59</sup>

Lewis and Rozelle posit that the root cause of PTSD is preconceptual misapprehension of *past* traumatic experience as if it were still happening in the *present*, i.e., a “reexperiencing” of the trauma.<sup>60</sup> According to the teachings on emptiness, they state that the hidden suffering of *samsara* is caused by the preconceptual misapprehension of the body and mind as being a permanent non-interdependent self.<sup>61</sup> They compare the use of EMDR in trauma therapy to cut through the misapprehension that causes trauma to the use of analytical meditation in the Gelugpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism to cut through the misapprehension that causes *samsara*.<sup>62</sup> They see the experiences of trauma and recovery from trauma as being analogous to

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<sup>55</sup> Lewis and Rozelle, 249.

<sup>56</sup> Lewis and Rozelle, 249.

<sup>57</sup> Lewis and Rozelle, 251.

<sup>58</sup> Lewis and Rozelle, 251.

<sup>59</sup> Deborah Rozelle and David Lewis, “Trauma and Relational Clinical Psychology through a Tibetan Buddhist Lens” (Conference on Mindfulness and Compassion: The Art and Science of Contemplative Practice, San Francisco State University, June 2015), slide 6; Deborah Rozelle and David Lewis, “PTSD and Buddhism: An Analogical Mapping Model” (Mind and Life International Symposium for Contemplative Studies, Boston, MA, October 31, 2014) slide 25.

<sup>60</sup> Lewis and Rozelle, “Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing,” 104.

<sup>61</sup> Rozelle and Lewis, “Trauma and Relational Clinical Psychology through a Tibetan Buddhist Lens,” slide 3; Rozelle and Lewis, “PTSD and Buddhism” slide 28; Lewis and Rozelle, “Mindfulness-Based Interventions,” 250; Lewis and Rozelle, “Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing,” 104-105.

<sup>62</sup> Lewis and Rozelle, “Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing,” 109-112.

the experiences of samsara and liberation from samsara.<sup>63</sup> But they state that the analogy is asymmetrical since the former is located in the everyday/psychological realm of experience while the latter is located in the radical/transcendent realm of experience. However, since the two sets of experiences seem to share a similar mechanics, they see what they refer to as a “functional correlation” between them.<sup>64</sup> As a result, they see PTSD as being “inside samsara” as a “subrealm analogous to the whole.”<sup>65</sup>

Like Lewis and Rozelle, in this dissertation I will distinguish between an everyday/psychological realm of phenomenological experience and a radical/transcendent realm of phenomenological experience. Like Lewis and Rozelle, I will categorize PTSD as an intense form of overt suffering experienced in the everyday/psychological realm, and I will categorize the suffering of identifying with and attaching to the body and mind as self as a hidden form of suffering experienced in the radical/transcendent realm. Like Lewis and Rozelle, I will frame PTSD as being “inside samsara” as a “subrealm analogous to the whole.” But instead of focusing on misapprehension as the common root cause of both PTSD and samsara, I will focus on the experience of being overwhelmed by intense body sensations and reactive emotions as the common root cause. Instead of using the Gelugpa teachings on emptiness to discuss misapprehension, I will use the GV teachings on the links of dependent origination to discuss being overwhelmed by sensation and reactive emotion. Instead of comparing EMDR with Gelugpa analytical meditation, I will compare SE with GV.

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<sup>63</sup> Rozelle and Lewis, “Trauma and Relational Clinical Psychology through a Tibetan Buddhist Lens” slide 16; Rozelle and Lewis, “PTSD and Buddhism” slide 35; Lewis and Rozelle, “Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing,” 119-120.

<sup>64</sup> Rozelle and Lewis, “Trauma and Relational Clinical Psychology through a Tibetan Buddhist Lens.” Slide 3

<sup>65</sup> Rozelle and Lewis, “PTSD and Buddhism,” slide 26.

Instead of Lewis and Rozelle's use of the traditional Buddhist teachings on the three kinds of suffering to structure the comparison of Buddhist meditation and trauma therapy, I will introduce a new framework based on a spectrum of intensity of body sensations and reactive emotions, and on common parlance in trauma therapy that speaks of "big T trauma" and "small t trauma."<sup>66</sup> I frame big T trauma as trauma caused by a major event or series of events and that result in major symptoms of hyperarousal, hypoarousal, and or disassociation. I frame small t trauma as trauma caused by a less major event or series of events and results in less major symptoms of hyperarousal, hypoarousal, and or disassociation. I posit that big T and small t trauma occur in the everyday psychological realm. I frame the process of rebirth as "*deep t trauma*" taking place within the radical/transcendental realm of experience. I characterize the realization of *nibbana* (nirvana)—i.e., liberation from rebirth—as the resolution of deep t trauma. I will use the early Buddhist teachings on the ten fetters (*samyojana*) to define the ten habit energies that cause rebirth. I will use GV teachings on mindfulness of gross to subtle body sensations and early Buddhist teachings on mindfulness of breathing and body sensations in meditative absorption (*jhana*) to describe the phenomenological experience of deep t trauma.

This discussion of closely related literature will now focus on Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on the eight consciousnesses. As mentioned above, no significant attempt has been made yet by the dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. to use the Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses to theorize about what trauma is. However, Thich Nhat Hanh has used the teachings on the eight consciousnesses to discuss working with "internal formations," deeply rooted habit energies in the store consciousness that cause suffering. As will be discussed in the literature review chapter (chapter two), Thich Nhat Hanh translates the term

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<sup>66</sup> Miller-Karas, *Building Resilience to Trauma*, 2.

*samyojana* as “internal formations” instead of the usual translation of the “ten fetters.”<sup>67</sup> Instead of referring to them as the ten mental formations (i.e., habit energies) that cause rebirth, he refers to them as deeply rooted emotions in a person’s store consciousness that cause suffering.

According to Thich Nhat Hanh, “we have the seeds for many kinds of internal formations in our store consciousness. These knots of ignorance, the cravings and afflictions in us, are the forces that shape so much of our behavior and lead us in the direction of suffering.”<sup>68</sup> Based on his written teachings and the interviews in this dissertation of six OI psychotherapists, I will explore how his teachings on internal formations as deeply rooted mental formations in the store consciousness can be used to theorize about what trauma is and how to respond to it in terms of small t and big T trauma in the everyday/psychological realm. I will compare Thich Nhat Hanh’s understanding of internal formations (*samyojana*) with GV’s understanding of the ten fetters (*samyojana*) to talk about deep t trauma in the radical/transcendent realm.

To conclude this review of closely related literature I will discuss how the combination of a relational psychology combined with a somatic trauma therapy approach is seen as a best practice for treating trauma. In a 2016 article in the *Smith College Studies in Social Work* journal entitled *Grounding Judith Herman’s Trauma Theory within Interpersonal Neuroscience and Evidence-Based Practice Modalities for Trauma Treatment*, co-authors Kristen Zaleski, Daniel Johnson, and Jessica Klein recommend as a best practice the combination of relational talk therapy with a somatic trauma therapy modality such as Somatic Experiencing, Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, or the Trauma Resiliency Model.<sup>69</sup> All three of those modalities are clinical

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<sup>67</sup> Hanh, *Transformation and Healing*, 104-110.

<sup>68</sup> Hanh, *Understanding Our Mind*, 95.

<sup>69</sup> Kristen Zaleski, Daniel K Johnson, and Jessica T Klein, “Grounding Judith Herman’s Trauma Theory within Interpersonal Neuroscience and Evidence-Based Practice Modalities for Trauma Treatment,” *Smith College Studies in Social Work* 86, no. 4 (October 3, 2016): 377–93.

applications of the polyvagal theory of evolutionary interpersonal neurobiology developed by Porges in collaboration with Levine.<sup>70</sup>

Herman, a Harvard-trained psychiatrist, is one of the main figures who, as part of the women's liberation movement, antiwar movement, and civil rights movement, revived the field of trauma therapy from Freud's early work on hysteria. In her seminal work *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, she puts forward a three-phase process of recovering from trauma.<sup>71</sup> The first phase is establishing safety. The second is remembering and mourning. The third is reconnecting to social bonds. Zaleski et. al stress the importance of embodied attunement between the therapist and client in order to support the client in going through Herman's three phases.<sup>72</sup> As part of that process, they also recommend the use of yoga and mindfulness to cultivate stable states of body and mind before dealing with traumatic memory and to help in processing traumatic memory. The article includes a case study of a woman who during her course of therapy remembers and processes the suppressed memory of being raped. The authors, in describing the overall approach to trauma therapy that they recommend, state,

Using a neurobiological lens, this work can be seen as integrating the explicit self (left hemisphere of the cerebral cortex) with the implicit, bodily based reactions to trauma (right hemisphere of the cerebral cortex). The technique of actually implementing this is different depending on the practitioner's skill set, but examples center around talk therapy, in whatever form feels best for the therapist and client, and is linked with the bodily based therapy that is so common among therapists today.<sup>73</sup>

In this dissertation I will also focus on the nature of traumatic memory as being made up of implicit body memory and explicit cognitive memory. Instead of focusing on the experience of a

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<sup>70</sup> Levine, "Polyvagal Theory and Trauma."

<sup>71</sup> Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence--From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), chap. 7-10.

<sup>72</sup> Zaleski, Johnson, and Klein, "Grounding Judith Herman's Trauma Theory," 382.

<sup>73</sup> Zaleski, Johnson, and Klein, 387.

client via a case study I will focus on the experience of the six OI psychotherapists providing trauma therapy, teaching meditation, and leading congregational practice. Instead of recommending an integration of relational psychotherapy and somatic trauma therapy, I will explore how OI Yogacara theory and practice could be used as a Buddhist relational psychology and how GV theory and practice based on the links of dependent origination could be used as a Buddhist somatic trauma counseling approach. I will explore how taken together, OI and GV theory and practice could serve as a basis for Buddhist counseling.

### **My Background in Buddhism and Trauma Therapy**

I approach this dissertation on Buddhist meditation and trauma therapy as a Buddhist practical theologian with a focus on spiritual care and counseling. *Practical theology* is one of the three main traditional disciplines of study in the field of mainline Protestant theology in Europe and the U.S. The other two are *systematic theology* and *historical theology*. This threefold division was established by Reformed theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834).<sup>74</sup> Schleiermacher was a co-founder of the University of Berlin—widely considered to be the template for the modern research university—and the first dean of the Theological Faculty within the university.<sup>75</sup> Two of the main traditional sub-disciplines within the field of practical theology have been *pastoral care and counseling* and *religious education*. The sub-discipline of pastoral care and counseling is now also commonly referred to as *spiritual care and counseling*. By choosing to focus on Buddhist meditation and trauma therapy via a PhD dissertation in practical theology, the academic approach of this dissertation differs significantly from the

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<sup>74</sup> Theodore Vial, *Schleiermacher: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 87.

<sup>75</sup> Vial, 86.

established approaches Buddhist scholar-practitioners have typically taken in the U.S. to work and publish as “professional Buddhists.”

One common approach Buddhist scholar-practitioners have taken has been to earn a PhD in religious studies and to write about topics such as the history of Buddhism, the meaning of Buddhist texts, or current sociological issues occurring in Buddhism today. The work of religious studies professors Robert Thurman, Donald Swearer, and Ann Gleig can be seen as examples of this approach.<sup>76</sup> Another approach has been to earn a masters or doctoral degree in psychology and to write about topics such as Buddhist-informed psychotherapy, secular mindfulness practice, or psychotherapy-informed Buddhist meditation. The work of WVM mental health clinicians Jack Kornfield, Tara Brach, Christa Neff, and Mark Epstein can be seen as examples of this approach.<sup>77</sup> A third approach has been for scholar-monastics who may or may not have a graduate level degree from a Western university to write about the theory and practice of Buddhism as a living tradition of religious practice. The work of Thich Nhat Hanh, Bhikkhu Bodhi, Pema Chodron, and Thanissaro Bhikkhu can be seen as examples of this approach.<sup>78</sup> My approach as a practical theologian focused on spiritual care and counseling can be seen as a hybrid approach that blends these three approaches. To better explain what I mean I will provide an overview of my background.

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<sup>76</sup> Robert A. F. Thurman, *The Central Philosophy of Tibet: A Study and Translation of Jey Tsong Khapa's Essence of True Eloquence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021); Donald K. Swearer, *Becoming the Buddha: The Ritual of Image Consecration in Thailand* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020); Gleig, *American Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Modernity*.

<sup>77</sup> Jack Kornfield, *The Wise Heart: A Guide to the Universal Teachings of Buddhist Psychology* (London: Bantam, 2008); Tara Brach, *Radical Acceptance: Embracing Your Life With the Heart of a Buddha*, (London: Bantam, 2004); Kristin Neff, *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself*, (New York: William Morrow Paperbacks, 2015); Epstein, *The Trauma of Everyday Life*.

<sup>78</sup> Hanh, *Understanding Our Mind*; Bodhi, “The Transformations of Mindfulness”; Bhikkhu Thanissaro, *The Paradox of Becoming* (Valley Center, CA: Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 2008); Pema Chodron, *When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2000).

My interest in Buddhism and trauma therapy began while I was an undergraduate at Vassar College (1991-1995) in Poughkeepsie New York. I learned the sitting meditation practice of counting the breath while focusing on the *hara* from John Daido Looi Roshi at Zen Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper New York. The *hara*, a term from Japanese Zen, is a breath-energy (Chinese *qi* Japanese *ki*) point located in the abdomen. By focusing on the breath at this point the mind becomes concentrated and breath energy is generated in the body. I went to the monastery about once a month for their Sunday program of meditation, chanting, Dharma talk, and lunch. I also established a daily sitting practice for 20 minutes a day in my dorm room at Vassar. In addition, I led a weekly meditation group on campus. During winter and summer breaks while at Vassar I did body-centered trauma therapy with a Buddhist therapist in Boulder named Stephanie Mines. I consider her to be my first Buddhist teacher who I worked with in depth as opposed to just learning how to meditate at Zen Mountain Monastery. During the semester I did sessions with Dr. Mines over the phone. She combined Somatic Experiencing with *jin shin jyutsu*, an acupressure technique developed by a Buddhist lay minister in Japan named Jiro Murai.<sup>79</sup> She has since gone on to develop her own form of *jin shin* called “Jin Shin TARA.”<sup>80</sup>

I would not say that I had big T trauma. My growing up was relatively stable and functional. But I would say that I had some prenatal trauma and birth trauma as a twin, some small t trauma, and a substantial amount of existential angst when it came to dealing with mortality and finding meaning in life. The main lessons I learned from Zen meditation and somatic trauma therapy were: that I had been up in my head, i.e., conceptual mind, and not in my body; that getting into my body meant getting in touch with and releasing suppressed emotions

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<sup>79</sup> “About Jin Shin Jyutsu,” accessed April 21, 2022, <https://www.jsjinc.net/pagedetails.php?id=jsj&ms=8>.

<sup>80</sup> “The TARA Approach,” The TARA Approach, accessed August 2, 2022, <http://www.tara-approach.org>. TARA stands for Tools for Awakening Resources and Awareness.

of grief, rage, anxiety, and fear; that situations in the present can trigger inordinate physical and emotional reactions from past unmetabolized experience; that it is possible to separate past experience from present triggers and metabolize experience from the past; that metabolizing past trauma can result in a greater capacity for meaningful relationships in the present; and that working with the emotions that arise with existential angst as body sensations instead of cognitive content can lead to a deepening of spiritual practice and a resolution of that angst.

I majored in film at Vassar. I also learned how to play West African hand drums from a master drummer that lived near Vassar. I ended up playing drums for modern dance classes at Vassar. In addition to film classes I took classes in drawing, dance, and sculpture. I wrote a final thesis paper on traditional African religion for an independent study in religious studies on African religion. Looking back now I would say that instead of majoring in film, I really majored in contemplative studies with a focus on Buddhist meditation, somatic trauma therapy, and West African drumming. The main focus was on engaging in contemplative practice intra-personally and interpersonally. Reading and writing were secondary practices in support of these contemplative practices. After graduating from Vassar, I did carpentry work and played drums for dance classes in Austin TX for three years. I considered going to graduate school to become an architect focused on ecological design but my interest in meditation and spiritual awakening proved to be a stronger pull.

I ordained as a monk with Thich Nhat Hanh in 1998 in Plum Village in the Dordogne region of France outside Bordeaux. Through his Dharma talks, books, and informal teachings Thich Nhat Hanh introduced me to the Discourse on the Full Awareness of Breathing (MN:118, *Anpappanasati Sutta*), the Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (MN:10, *Satipatthana Sutta*), the teachings on emptiness from the Heart Sutra, and the Yogacara

teachings on the eight consciousnesses. His teachings on using mindfulness practice to embrace and transform unwholesome internal formations in the store consciousness reminded me of what I had learned doing somatic trauma therapy with Dr. Mines. I felt like I was continuing the same skillset as a Buddhist monk trying to realize nirvana that I had learned doing trauma therapy. I also drew from that trauma therapy skillset when leading Buddhist practice for lay practitioners who came to the monastery for the day or for multi-day retreats. The practices I engaged in and led included sitting meditation, walking meditation, a laying down body-scan, Dharma discussion, counseling sessions, chanting, yoga, cooking, and working meditation.

After six years of training as a monk at Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village monastery in France and Deer Park Monastery in Escondido CA, I spent six more years as a Buddhist monk at different Buddhist monasteries and Hindu ashrams in Europe, Asia, and the U.S. I went to these monasteries and ashrams in order to engage in more intensive meditation practice. Two of the places I went to were a Thai Forest monastery in England called Chithurst Monastery for three months, and a ten-day Goenka Vipassana retreat at Dhamma Giri, the GV center outside of Mumbai.<sup>81</sup> From 2007-2010 I was mainly in Tiruvannamalai with Sri Lakshmana Swami and Sri Saradamma, two Gurus in the Advaita (non-dual) Vedanta tradition of Sri Ramana Maharishi. My main meditation practices during this time of intensive practice were counting the breath while focusing on the *hara*, resting in open awareness, and investigating the source of awareness. While in Tiruvannamalai I spent my days meditating in my apartment, reading about Sri Ramana and his disciples, going for Darshan with my Gurus, practicing yoga asanas, circumambulating

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<sup>81</sup> Shortly after I became a monk, my twin brother became a serious practitioner in GV and went on to become an Assistant Teacher. I sat a second GV ten-day course at a center in southern California while doing my M.Div. degree at University of the West. My discussion with my brother, those two ten-day retreats, and my reading of GV texts are what I draw from in writing about GV theory and practice. I would sit more GV courses, but the GV organization does not allow for long-term students to engage in other styles of meditation practice or to teach other styles.

the mountain, spending time with other devotees, and doing gardening work for my Gurus. I spent nine months of the year living in Tiruvannamali and three months of the year teaching meditation at Yoga studios in Fort Worth Texas and leading an annual retreat in New Mexico. The money I raised from donations teaching meditation for three months in the U.S. paid for my living expenses in India for the following nine months.

After being a monk for 12 years I reached a point where I wanted to return to lay life in terms of wanting to be in a long-term romantic relationship again. I decided to move back to the U.S. and go to graduate school so I could convert what I had learned as an undergrad and as a monk into a meaningful livelihood as a lay Buddhist minister. I decided I wanted to earn degrees in divinity and theology because I saw myself as a religious practitioner who wanted to work as a religious minister. I felt that if I went the route of religious studies, I would not be able to teach meditation and offer counseling. I felt that if I went the route of psychology, I would not be able to base my work in Buddhism as a living religion and that I would have to learn a whole new set of Western psychology theory and practice that I was not as interested in. I wanted to deepen my understanding of Buddhism and become a Buddhist minister. I completed a Master of Divinity degree with a focus on Buddhist chaplaincy at University of the West in Los Angeles (2012-2015) and as of this writing am currently completing my PhD in practical theology with a focus on spiritually integrated psychotherapy at the Claremont School of Theology (2015-present).

## **Methodology and Methods**

The methodology of this dissertation is mutual critical correlation, also known as the “revised correlation method.”<sup>82</sup> This methodology has been used by practical theologians to

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<sup>82</sup> David Tracy, “A Correlational Model of Practical Theology Revisited,” in *Religion, Diversity and Conflict*, ed. Edward Foley, (Zürich, Germany: LIT Verlag, 2011), 49–61.

compare theory and practice from religious traditions with the theory and practice from other academic fields. The original “correlation method” developed by Protestant systematic theologian Paul Tillich (1886-1965) correlated questions from existential philosophy with answers from Christian theology.<sup>83</sup> Catholic systematic theologian David Tracy critiqued Tillich’s correlation method as being more of a juxtaposition of existential questions with theological answers instead of being a true correlation between two traditions of theory and practice. According to Tracy, this is because Tillich did not take into account the original questions from Christian theology that gave rise to its own answers, nor did it take into account the answers from existential philosophy that arose from its own existential questions.<sup>84</sup>

Practical theologians in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century further developed Tracy’s revised correlation method by taking it from the realm of systematic theology into the realm of practical theology.<sup>85</sup> They wanted a methodology that could be used to integrate theory and practice from non-theological fields such as psychology and sociology into the theory and practice of spiritual care and religious education. They adapted Tracy’s revised correlation method to fit those needs. In discussing this adaptation practical theologian Don Browning (1934-2010) states,

In general terms, a revised correlational program in theology attempts to correlate critically both the questions and answers about human experience derived from an interpretation of the central Christian witness *with* the questions and answers implicit in various interpretations of ordinary human experience. The same method applied to practical theology means a critical correlation between the norms for human action and fulfillment revealed in interpretations of the Christian witness *and* the norms for action and fulfillment implicit in various interpretations of ordinary human experience.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *Reason and Revelation, Being and God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 60.

<sup>84</sup> David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1975), 46.

<sup>85</sup> Lewis S. Mudge and James Newton Poling, eds., *Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology* (Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1987).

<sup>86</sup> Don S. Browning, “Practical Theology and Religious Education,” in *The Promise of Practical Theology: Formation and Reflection*, ed. Lewis Mudge and James Poling (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 80.

This dissertation seeks to correlate critically the norms for human action and fulfillment put forward in interpretations of Buddhist teachings on meditation with the norms for action and fulfillment put forward in interpretations of somatic trauma therapy. In particular, this dissertation seeks to correlate critically the understandings of suffering and how to respond to it put forward by GV and the OI with the understandings of trauma and how to respond to it from SE and trauma therapy in general. It seeks to make this critical correlation mutual in that it seeks to explore the strengths and weaknesses of both Buddhist meditation and trauma therapy for their mutual benefit.

Based on a seminar in practical theology taught by practical and pastoral theologian Kathleen Greider that I took as part of my doctoral course work at the Claremont School of Theology, my understanding of the relationship between methodology and methods in academic research is that a methodology is one's overall approach to research and methods are the specific research approaches used in the service of one's methodology. To mutually critically correlate the theory and practice of GV and SE I use the method of comparing how core GV texts understand and respond to suffering with how core SE texts understand and respond to trauma. I also draw from my experience as a GV retreatant, a somatic trauma therapy client, and an attendee of a multiday SE training.

To mutually critically correlate the theory and practice of OI Buddhist meditation with common tenets of trauma therapy, I use the qualitative research method of phenomenological interviews combined with a comparison of relevant texts. To do this I conducted phenomenological interviews of six OI psychotherapists to explore their experience of integrating Buddhist meditation and trauma therapy into their roles as therapist, meditation teacher, and or congregational minister. I then analyzed the transcripts of the interviews within

the context of Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on the eight consciousnesses and the general understanding of trauma therapy put forward by psychiatrists Judith Herman, John Briere, Catherine Scott, and Dan Siegel.<sup>87</sup> I also drew from my experience as a trauma therapy client, a pastoral counselor, a former OI monk, and a former OI lay member.

## Terms and Definitions

**Anusaya Kilesa:** In Pali *anusaya* means “latent disposition” and *kilesa* means “defilement.”<sup>88</sup>

The *anusaya kilesa* are seven deeply rooted mental formations that are seen in the Pali Canon to be the cause of rebirth. They are “(1) sensual lust, (2) attachment to existence, (3) aversion, (4) conceit, (5) wrong views, (6) doubt, (7) ignorance.”<sup>89</sup> The *anusaya kilesa* can be seen as an alternative list to the list of the ten fetters (*samyojana*) which are also seen as deeply rooted mental formations that cause rebirth (see definition of ten fetters below).

**Eight Consciousnesses:** The eightfold phenomenological categorization of consciousness from Mahayana Yogacara teachings.<sup>90</sup> There are the “five sense faculties” (Pali & Skt *indriya*) of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. There is the “mind consciousness” (Skt *manovijñāna*) which is conscious mental awareness of mental objects. There is the “afflicted consciousness” (Skt *manas vijñāna*) which is experienced as the identification with and attachment to the body and mind as self and of there being an external world separate from the self. There is the “store consciousness” (*ālāyavijñāna*) which is the basis for the seven other consciousnesses to manifest and in which they are maintained. The store consciousness stores

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<sup>87</sup> Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 33; Zaleski, Johnson, and Klein, “Grounding Judith Herman’s Trauma Theory,” 378-380; Briere and Scott, *Principles of Trauma Therapy*, chap. 1; Daniel J. Siegel, *Mindsight* (New York: Bantam, 2010), chap. 8.

<sup>88</sup> Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*, 84.

<sup>89</sup> Bodhi, ed., *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma* (Seattle: Pariyatti Publishing, 2000), 267.

<sup>90</sup> Thrangu Rinpoche, *The Five Buddha Families and the Eight Consciousnesses*.

mental formations as seeds (*bija*) that can manifest as a person's experience of sensations, emotions, cognitive stances, thoughts, mental phenomena, and sensory experience.

**Five Links of Dependent Origination:** Links six through ten of the 12-link (*nidana*) chain of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) that repeatedly occur in the present lifetime. Those links are (1) contact (*phassa*), (2) sensation (*vedana*), (3), craving (*tanha*), (4) grasping (*upadana*), and (5) becoming (*bhava*). Contact is contact between a sense base and a sense object. This includes contact between the five sense bases and their respective sense objects as well as the mind consciousness and mental objects. Sensation is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral physical sensation. Craving is a mental formation in the form of an intention/emotion that arises from sensation. Grasping is the acting on intention/emotion that arises from sensation. Becoming is the embodied result of acting on intention/emotion. The embodied result of becoming leads to the next round of contact between a sense base and a sense object. Wholesome intention/emotion leads to favorable becoming in the present life and favorable rebirth in future lives.

Unwholesome intention/emotion leads to unfavorable becoming in the present life and unfavorable rebirth in future lives. The ultimate goal is to become liberated from the process of becoming altogether by abandoning all intention/emotion. In more karmically neutral terms, the five links can be listed as (1) contact (*bhava*), (2) sensation (*vedana*), (3) intention/emotion (*sankkhara*), (4) action (Pali *kamma* Skt *karma*), and (5) becoming (*bhava*).

**The Four Establishments of Mindfulness:** The four establishments of mindfulness (*satipatthana*) represent the Buddha's contemplative structure for meditation practice. The four establishments are body (*kaya*), sensation/feeling (*vedana*), heart-mind (*citta*), and Dhamma which, in this case, means an interpretative framework based on the Four Noble Truths to contemplate the previous three establishments. This dissertation distinguishes between four

different modern interpretations of the teachings on *satipatthana*, namely the interpretation of 1) Thanissaro Bikkhu from the Thai Forest tradition, 2) S.N. Goenka from the GV lineage, 3) Joseph Goldstein from the WVM, and 4) and Thich Nhat Hanh from the OI.<sup>91</sup> Thanissaro's interpretation is based on early Buddhist texts from the Pali Canon that contextualize *satipatthana* teachings within an interconnected system of teachings known as the Wings of Awakening. His interpretation differs significantly from the theoretical framework of Theravada scholasticism that is based on the fifth century Indian scholar monk Buddhaghosa's the *Visuddhimagga* (Path of Purification), a compendium of Pali doctrine and practice. Goenka's interpretation is based on the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*. It is a body-centered version of the *Visuddhimagga* theoretical framework. Goldstein's interpretation is based on the *Satipatthana Sutta* and is an existential humanist version of the *Visuddhimagga* theoretical framework. Thich Nhat Hanh's interpretation is based on both the *Anapanasati Sutta* and the *Satipatthana Sutta* and is also an existential humanist reading of the *Visuddhimagga* theoretical framework. But Thich Nhat Hanh also brings in an existential humanist reading of Mahayana teachings on emptiness and the eight consciousnesses. These four different interpretations of *satipatthana* teachings will be discussed in the literature review chapter (chapter two).

**Implicit and Explicit Memory:** The following discussion of implicit and explicit memory is based on chapter eight from psychiatrist Dan Siegel's book *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*.<sup>92</sup> Implicit memory manifests as body sensation, emotion, sensory experience, and or mental images. Explicit memory manifests as a cognitive narrative along with

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<sup>91</sup> Ajhan Sujato, *A History of Mindfulness, How Insight Worsted Tranquility in the Satipatthana Sutta* (New South Wales, Australia: Santipada, 2012); Thanissaro, *With Each & Every Breath: A Guide to Meditation* (Valley Center: Metta Forest Monastery, 2013); S. N. Goenka, *Satipatthana Sutta Discourses: Talks from a course in Mahasatipatthana Sutta* (Onalaska, WA: Pariyatti, 1998); Joseph Goldstein, *Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Awakening* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2013); Hanh, *Breathe! You Are Alive*; Hanh, *Transformation and Healing*.

<sup>92</sup> Siegel, *Mindsight*, chap. 8.

some combination of implicit content. According to Siegel, the hippocampus in the brain records explicit memory. It does not start functioning until about two years of age. The parts of the brain that record implicit memory starts in the womb. Thus, a person can have implicit memories from in the womb until about two years of age as body sensations and emotions without a cognitive narrative. Implicit memory can also function as procedural memory such as the muscle memory of remembering how to ride a bicycle or drive a car. During a traumatizing event, the hippocampus can shut down resulting in a person only having implicit memories of a traumatizing event without explicit memories. Implicit trauma memory can manifest as body sensation, emotion, a cognitive stance, and or a mental image without an explicit narrative. Implicit memories can get triggered by stimuli in the present that remind the person of the past traumatizing event.

**Mental Formation:** Pali *sankhara* Sanskrit *samskara*. A multivalent term in Buddhism the meaning of which varies depending on the context it is understood to be in. In the most general sense, it means a “formation” or “conditioned” phenomenon.<sup>93</sup> In this sense all of the five aggregates of body, sensation, perception, mental formation, and consciousness can be seen as mental formations.<sup>94</sup> As the fourth of the five aggregates it tends to mean intention/emotion.<sup>95</sup> As part of the links of dependent origination it also tends to mean intention/emotion.<sup>96</sup> Within the context of the eight consciousnesses, mental formations are seen as seeds (Skt *bija*) in the store consciousness that can manifest as the various phenomena of body and mind experienced in the other seven consciousness.<sup>97</sup> The latent tendencies (*anusaya kilesa*) and the ten fetters

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<sup>93</sup> “Mental Formation,” *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, Buswell and Lopez, 758.

<sup>94</sup> Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*, chapter 23.

<sup>95</sup> Hanh, chapter 23.

<sup>96</sup> “Mental Formation,” *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, Buswell and Lopez, 758.

<sup>97</sup> Hanh, *Understanding Our Mind*, chap. 12.

(*samyojana*) can be seen as particular kinds of mental formations that are deeply rooted in the store consciousness and that cause rebirth.

**Polyvagal Theory:** The neurobiological theory developed by Stephen Porges that traces three sets of vagal nerves to three regions of the body connected to three regions of the brain that govern three instinctual drives in the nervous system. For the sake of clarity and brevity I will cite Levine defining those three sets.

The *dorsal-vagal system* [... governs] immobilization, metabolic conservation, and overall shutdown. Its target is the internal visceral organs. The *sympathetic nervous system* [governs] mobilization and enhanced action (as in fight or flight); its target in the body is the limbs. [...] The ventral branch of the parasympathetic nervous system [...known] as the *social engagement system* [... is] linked neuroanatomically to the cranial nerves that mediate acoustic tuning, vocalization, and facial expression.<sup>98</sup>

In terms of traumatic threat, polyvagal theory posits three kinds of instinctual response in a “phylogenetically ordered hierarchy.”<sup>99</sup> The first response is to try and resolve the threat through social engagement such as collective efforts to deal with a natural disaster or individual actions of “tending and befriending” to deal with interpersonal threats. The cranial muscles are used to speak in a calming voice, to smile, and to be attuned to higher frequency speech sounds.<sup>100</sup> If social engagement does not work, the second response is to fight or flee. The body releases large amounts of adrenaline to supercharge the body with energy and the blood vessels flood the limbs with blood for intense physical exertion.<sup>101</sup> If fighting or fleeing does not work the body goes into the immobility response to pretend like it is dead, i.e., “death feigning.”<sup>102</sup> One’s bowels and or bladder may involuntarily evacuate, one’s consciousness may dissociate, and one’s body may

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<sup>98</sup> Levine, “Polyvagal Theory and Trauma,” 14-15.

<sup>99</sup> Stephen W. Porges, *The Pocket Guide to the Polyvagal Theory: The Transformative Power of Feeling Safe* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017,) glossary, Kindle.

<sup>100</sup> Porges, glossary, Kindle.

<sup>101</sup> Porges, glossary, Kindle.

<sup>102</sup> Porges. glossary, Kindle.

go still. The blood is in the core of the body and the nervous system is geared towards maintaining basic survival functions in the body.

**Ten Fetters (*samyojana*) and Four Fruits of Attainment (Sotāpanna, Sakadāgāmi,**

**Anāgāmi, and Arahant):** The ten fetters are the ten deeply rooted habit energies that are seen to cause rebirth in early Buddhist teachings. The ten fetters are (1) identity view, (2) doubt, (3) misapprehension of precepts and observances, (4) sensual desire, (5) ill will, (6) desire for rebirth in the realm of luminous form, (7) desire for rebirth in the formless realm, (8) conceit, (9) restlessness, and (10) ignorance.<sup>103</sup>

The four fruits of attainment are thresholds a practitioner crosses in Buddhist practice in which there is an experience of *nibbana* (nirvana) and a number of the fetters are weakened or completely uprooted. Attainment of the four fruits is said decrease or eliminate the karmic momentum of rebirth. The four fruits of attainment are: 1) stream entry (*sotāpanna*), which uproots the first three fetters and prevents rebirth in a realm lower than human; 2) once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), which weakens the fourth and fifth fetters and leaves one more rebirth as a human, 3) non-returner (*anāgāmi*) which uproots the fourth and fifth fetters and leaves one more rebirth in a special spirit world where one will attain *nibbana*; and 4) and *arahant* which uproots the final five fetters and brings about an end of rebirth.

**Trauma:** According to psychiatrists John Briere and Catherine Scott, “an event is traumatic if it is extremely upsetting, at least temporarily overwhelms the individual’s internal resources, and produces lasting psychological symptoms.”<sup>104</sup> According to trauma professional Pat Ogden, “unresolved trauma can be conceptualized as deriving from overwhelming experiences that

<sup>103</sup> “Fetters —Bhikkhu Sujato,” SuttaCentral, accessed January 17, 2021, <https://suttacentral.net/an10.13/en/sujato>.

<sup>104</sup> Briere and Scott, *Principles of Trauma Therapy*, 10.

cannot be integrated.”<sup>105</sup> According to Zaleski et al, the work of remembering and mourning implicit and explicit traumatic memory is the work of metabolizing those memories.<sup>106</sup> Thus, trauma can be seen as the result of an overwhelming experience or series of experiences that the person’s body and mind has not metabolized yet and that manifests as symptoms of trauma. Trauma professional Elaine-Miller Karas distinguishes between “big T” and “little t” trauma.<sup>107</sup> Big T trauma is typically caused by a major event or series of events such as a car accident, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and or combat in war. The symptoms tend to be intense forms of hyperarousal, hypoarousal, and or dissociation. Small t trauma is typically caused by a less intense traumatizing experience or series of experiences with symptoms that tend to be less intense forms of hyperarousal, hyperarousal, and dissociation.

## **Outline of the Chapters**

### **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Chapter two is divided into three sections. In the first section an overview is given of the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. from 2012 until the present. It demonstrates that the participants have mainly been WVM scholar practitioners and trauma therapy scholar practitioners. It demonstrates that the dialogue has mainly focused on how WVM *vipassana* theory and practice can be integrated into trauma therapy and why somatic trauma therapy theory and practice should be integrated into WVM teachings. The second section provides historical context to the dialogue by tracing different traditions of theory and practice that have been included in the dialogue or have been left out but should be included.

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<sup>105</sup> Pat Ogden, *Sensorimotor Psychotherapy: Interventions for Trauma and Attachment* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2015), 27.

<sup>106</sup> Zaleski, Johnson, and Klein, “Grounding Judith Herman’s Trauma Theory,” 386.

<sup>107</sup> Miller-Karas, *Building Resilience to Trauma*, 1-3

These traditions include trauma therapy going back to Freud, the WVM going back to Mingun Sayadaw, the Thai Forest tradition going back to Ajhan Mun, the GV lineage going back to Ledi Sayadaw, and the OI going back to the Chinese monk Taixu. The third section compares and contrasts modern commentaries on *satipatthana* teachings in the Pali Canon from different traditions and discusses their relevance to the dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods**

Chapter three begins with my giving my religious location in terms of my upbringing, sociopolitical position, and view on how different religions relate to each other. I then introduce my theoretical framework of the three modes of knowledge production, namely the early Buddhist yogic, the later Buddhist scholastic, and the modern scientific scholastic. I then discuss the methodology of mutual critical correlation that I use to mutually critically correlate theory and practice from Buddhism and trauma therapy with. I conclude with a discussion of my research methods. One is a hermeneutic comparison of texts from GV and SE. The other is phenomenological interviews of six OI participants who are psychotherapists.

### **Chapter Four: A Mutual Critical Correlation of Goenka Vipassana and Somatic Experiencing**

In this chapter I mutually critically correlate the GV understanding of the Four Noble Truths with how SE understands trauma, its cause, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation. I argue that both GV and SE speak of a person being caught in a repeating cycle in which they are overwhelmed by sensation and reactive emotion which leads to negative forms of acting out. I argue that both teach that the key to coming out of that cycle is to detach or uncouple sensation from reactive emotion in order for stored material to be organically released. I argue that both teach a path of practice that involves establishing stability of body mind, cultivating awareness

of and equanimity towards body sensation, and allowing stored reactive emotions to come up and be released. I conclude that GV and SE theory and practice is very similar but that their social contexts and goals are different. I argue that taken together they could provide an integrated theory and practice that covers regular trauma and spiritual trauma, and that provides both meditation retreats and one on one counseling for social context.

### **Chapter Five: Themes from Interviews with OI Participants**

In this chapter I present the results of the interviews by discussing the themes that emerged for each question asked to the participants. I start the chapter by giving background information about the participants. Then I list the research questions. Then I present the themes going question by question.

### **Chapter Six: A Mutual Critical Correlation of OI Meditation and Trauma Therapy**

In this chapter I analyze the themes of the interviews using the theoretical framework of the three modes of knowledge production to mutually critically correlate OI theory and practice with trauma therapy theory and practice. I start by discussing what the OI participants add to the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. Then I discuss how what the OI participants offered in their interviews is similar to or different from the dialogue in terms of overall hermeneutic trends when it comes to the three modes of knowledge production. Then I present short sketches of each of the participants in terms of how each of them has mutually critically correlated theory and practice from Buddhism and trauma therapy. I conclude by discussing how the OI could go forward in terms of developing a popular education model of Buddhist spiritual care and counseling that could recognize and respond to trauma.

### **Chapter Seven: Conclusion**

In chapter seven I start by restating the research problem this dissertation dealt with and the thesis it put forward. I then discuss what this dissertation contributes to the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy and what it contributes to the fields of practical and pastoral theology. I then present a prototypical model of Buddhist counseling that could be used by Buddhist ministers based on correlating Buddhist theory and practice with Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. I then conclude the chapter by discussing future areas of research.

## *Chapter Two: Literature Review*

This chapter provides an overview of the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S., its historical context, and a comparison of WVM teachings on *satipatthana* with Thai Forest, GV, and OI teachings on *satipatthana*. The first section presents a timeline of the dialogue from 2012 until the present. The second section presents the historical context of the dialogue going back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The third section compares Goldstein's WVM commentary on the *Satipatthana Sutta* with commentaries on Pali *satipatthana* texts from the Thai Forest, GV, and OI traditions. The first section demonstrates that the dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. has mainly been a conversation between the WVM on the one hand and trauma therapy on the other. The main themes have been how the WVM can make use of trauma therapy theory and practice and how trauma therapy can make use of WVM theory and practice. The second section historically contextualizes the dialogue as representing two genres of modern publications, namely meditation manuals and commentaries on canonical texts by Buddhist scholar practitioners, and publications on trauma therapy by psychiatrists, psychologists, and neuroscientists. A brief history of trauma therapy as a tradition of theory and practice is given followed by brief histories of the WVM, GV, Thai Forest, and OI traditions of theory and practice. The third section compares commentaries from the above-mentioned Buddhist traditions on *satipatthana* teachings in the Pali Canon. This comparison demonstrates that the U.S.-Buddhism-trauma-therapy dialogue's understanding of Buddhism has been based on an existential humanist interpretation of Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* and that other understandings of Buddhism have not yet been considered even though they are highly relevant.

## The Scholarly Dialogue Between Buddhism and Trauma Therapy from 2012 to Present

Treleaven's 2012 dissertation marks the initiation of the dialogue in earnest between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. As discussed in chapter one, Treleaven argues that WVM *vipassana* meditation teachings on *satipatthana* and on RAIN (recognition, acceptance, investigation, and non-identification) are insufficient in their ability to recognize and respond to trauma.<sup>1</sup> He also argues that the typical WVM retreat structure lacks the trauma-informed social engagement needed to help prevent traumatized retreatants from being retraumatized.<sup>2</sup> He points to Tara Brach's 2004 book *Radical Acceptance* and Kornfield's 2008 book *The Wise Heart: A Guide to the Universal Teachings of Buddhist Psychology* as examples of WVM Dharma teachers who are psychotherapists using WVM teachings to help therapy clients recognize and work with difficult sensations, emotions, and thoughts.<sup>3</sup> Even though they don't explicitly mention somatic trauma therapy theory and practice in those two books, he speculates that Kornfield and Brach may have already integrated that theory and practice into their clinical work and teaching. He recommends that the WVM integrate somatic trauma therapy theory and practice such as SE into its teacher training and that a trauma therapist be available at WVM retreats.<sup>4</sup>

Treleaven argues that SE neurobiological theory and practice focused on body sensation can improve upon WVM *satipatthana* teachings and the practice of RAIN.<sup>5</sup> He argues that bare recognition and acceptance of painful sensations, feelings, and thoughts can be retraumatizing and therefore working with body sensations through SE practices such as resourcing,

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<sup>1</sup> Treleaven, "Meditation and Trauma," 67-72, 144.

<sup>2</sup> Treleaven, 73-74, 142-143.

<sup>3</sup> Treleaven, 32-33.

<sup>4</sup> Treleaven, 142-144.

<sup>5</sup> Treleaven, 70-71, 144.

pendulation, and titration in the context of social engagement is a more effective way to work with painful physical and emotional experience.<sup>6</sup>

In Briere and Scott's 2014 book *Principles of Trauma Therapy: A Guide to Symptoms, Evaluation, and Treatment* they include a chapter entitled "mindfulness and trauma treatment."<sup>7</sup> They argue that under the right conditions, trauma therapy clients can use mindfulness practice to cultivate: "*settling skills*," the ability to handle "*exposure*" to traumatic material, "*metacognitive awareness*" of intrusive negative cognition, "*reduced reactivity*" to painful sensations and emotions, and "*existential insight*" into the nature of reality.<sup>8</sup> The existential insights include: the ability to distinguish between unavoidable pain and suffering and one's reaction to it; the ability to face the reality of impermanence; and the ability to open up to the reality of dependent origination as material and psycho-social interdependence.<sup>9</sup>

Briere and Scott refer to a Buddhist teaching from the Pali Canon about a person hit by two arrows to discuss the insight of distinguishing between life's unavoidable pain and one's reaction to it.<sup>10</sup> According to Briere and Scott, "the first arrow is the objective pain felt when encountering an adverse event, such as trauma or loss. The second arrow is the extent to which the pain is exacerbated by the needs and responses that increase suffering—especially those involving nonacceptance."<sup>11</sup> This discernment between pain and suffering carries within it an interpretation of the Four Noble Truths that is common in the dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy. According to this common interpretation, The First Noble Truth is that life inevitably involves physical and emotional pain and reactions to that pain. The reactions, with

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<sup>6</sup> Treleaven, 144.

<sup>7</sup> Briere and Scott, *Principles of Trauma Therapy*, 215-230.

<sup>8</sup> Briere and Scott, 223-225.

<sup>9</sup> Briere and Scott, 225-227.

<sup>10</sup> "English Translation of SN 36.6, 'The Dart,'" SuttaCentral, accessed February 27, 2018, <https://suttacentral.net/en/sn36.6>.

<sup>11</sup> Briere and Scott, *Principles of Trauma Therapy*.

practice, can be let go of. Pain is a natural part of existential experience; suffering is made up of the reactions to the pain. The Second Noble Truth is that the cause of suffering is ignorance which is defined as lack of existential insight into the nature of reality. This results in a person wanting things in their life to be a certain way when in reality those things are beyond that person's ability to control. The Third Noble Truth is that the cessation of this ignorance is possible via existential insight into the nature of reality as impermanent, suffering when attached to, not self, and physically and psycho-socially interdependent with the wider world. The Eightfold path is the path of ethics and mindfulness practice that leads to existential insight.

Briere and Scott close their chapter on mindfulness and trauma therapy by recommending the WVM secular mindfulness approaches of MBSR and MBCT for clients who can tolerate mindfulness of the body, emotions, and thoughts.<sup>12</sup> They recommend therapists to develop their own mindfulness practice by attending MBSR and MBCT classes as well as retreats at IMS and Spirit Rock.<sup>13</sup> They also recommend Theravada and Zen monasteries that are up to the same standards as WVM institutions.

Religious studies scholar Jane Compson published a journal article in 2014 entitled *Meditation, Trauma and Suffering in Silence: Raising Questions about How Meditation is Taught and Practiced in Western Contexts in the Light of a Contemporary Trauma Resiliency Model*.<sup>14</sup> Based on trauma expert and social worker Elaine Miller Karas' Trauma Resiliency Model—which is in large part based on SE—Compson argues that intensive multiday silent meditation retreats in the U.S., such as the ones taught by Goenka *vipassana*, can traumatize people.<sup>15</sup> She speculates that the full context of traditional Buddhist teachings and social settings

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<sup>12</sup> Briere and Scott, 222.

<sup>13</sup> Briere and Scott, 229.

<sup>14</sup> Compson, "Meditation, Trauma and Suffering in Silence."

<sup>15</sup> Compson, 283.

in Asia may have mitigated against practitioners being traumatized but that that context was lost when *vipassana* meditation was brought to the U.S.<sup>16</sup> She argues that weekly MBSR classes that involve less intensive meditation and more social engagement may be a safer social context for people to learn mindfulness in. Like Treleaven, she points to the WVM understanding of *satipatthana* as a contemplative structure of *vipasanna* practice that needs to be supplemented by an SE-based somatic trauma therapy and a social context with more social engagement.<sup>17</sup>

In his 2014 book *The Trauma of Everyday Life*, psychiatrist Mark Epstein equates the First Noble Truth of suffering (*dukkha*) with trauma. The title of the book is an homage to Freud's 1904 book *The Pathology of Everyday Life*. Epstein is a Harvard-trained MD who first encountered Goldstein and Kornfield at a Buddhist summer camp in Boulder in his youth. He is a lifelong WVM practitioner. Epstein's book critically correlates psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott's (1896-1971) developmental and relational Freudian psychoanalytic theory and practice with WVM *satipatthana* theory and practice. He also includes interpersonal neurobiological research into early childhood attachment between an infant and the primary caregiver, usually the mother. He begins his book by stating that life is inherently traumatic, but that by practicing "realistic view"—i.e., right view (*samma ditthi*) from the Eightfold Path—and *satipatthana* practice as taught in the *Satipatthana Sutta*, one can learn to accept unavoidable pain and let go of the avoidable reactions to it. According to Epstein,

A critical component of what became known as the Noble Eightfold Path, Realistic View, counseled that trauma, in any of its forms, is not a failure or a mistake. It is not something to be ashamed of, not a sign of weakness, and not a reflection of inner failing. It is simply a fact of life.<sup>18</sup>

This attitude toward trauma is at the heart of the Buddha's teaching, although it is often overlooked in the rush to embrace the inner peace that his teachings also promised. [...]

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<sup>16</sup> Compson, 282.

<sup>17</sup> Compson, 290.

<sup>18</sup> Epstein, *The Trauma of Everyday Life*, 2.

The Buddha taught that a realistic view makes all the difference. If one can treat trauma as a fact and not as a failing, one has the chance to learn from the inevitable slings and arrows that comes one's way. Meditation makes profound use of this philosophy, but its utility is not limited to meditation. As my patient realized when grappling with his diagnosis, the traumas of everyday life, if they do not destroy us, become bearable, even illuminating, when we learn to relate to them differently.<sup>19</sup>

Epstein's understanding of suffering as trauma is consistent with the two-arrow logic of Briere and Scott quoted above. The first arrow is the unavoidable physical and emotional pain that comes with life. The second arrow is suffering as reaction to the pain. In stating that trauma/suffering is a fact of life, Epstein is drawing from the Theravada scholastic teachings that rationally argue how life is pervaded by three kinds of suffering, namely the suffering of suffering (*dukkha dukkha*), suffering due to change (*viparinama dukkha*), and the suffering of conditioned states (*sankhara dukkha*).<sup>20</sup> This is an elaboration of the definition of suffering in the Theravada scholastic teachings on the three marks of existence that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, suffering, and not self.

Epstein refers to the Discourse on The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*Satipatthana Sutta*) as the Buddha's meditation teachings on how to a) recognize and accept pain instead of trying to avoid it, and how to b) open up to the existential insight of no self through awareness of the mind as a nondual witnessing presence.<sup>21</sup> According to Epstein, "the Four Foundations of Mindfulness are the domains of personal experience—the foci—in which mindfulness can be practiced. The Buddha specified them as consisting of the body (or breath), feelings, the mind, and mental objects like thoughts and emotions."<sup>22</sup> Epstein describes the practice of the first two foundations (i.e., establishments) as accepting the painful, pleasant, and neutral experiences of

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<sup>19</sup> Epstein, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught: Revised and Expanded Edition with Texts from Suttas and Dhammapada* (New York: Grove Press, 1974), 16-28.

<sup>21</sup> Epstein, *The Trauma of Everyday Life*, 139-140.

<sup>22</sup> Epstein, 124.

the body and of feelings instead of trying to dissociate from them.<sup>23</sup> In discussing the third establishment Epstein states that it has “to do with the ability of the mind to know itself knowing.”<sup>24</sup> He states that meditating on the third foundation/establishment can lead to the experience of a non-dual witnessing self that accepts internal and external experience. He describes the practice of the fourth foundation/establishment as mindfulness of emotions and cognitive patterns.<sup>25</sup>

Epstein speculates that the Buddha’s quest for enlightenment may have been spurred in large part by the implicit traumatic memories of his mother dying a week after he was born.<sup>26</sup> He frames the Buddha’s pre-enlightenment practice of meditative absorption and of harsh austerities as attempts by him to dissociate from his embodied experience.<sup>27</sup> He frames the Buddha’s teachings on *satipatthana* that led to his enlightenment as the Buddha’s success in establishing a healthy inner parent that could a) accept the pain of his developmental trauma, and b) experience no self as a non-dual awareness of internal and external experience free from identification and attachment.<sup>28</sup> He argues that,

The Buddha did not teach the four foundations [i.e., establishments] as a ladder toward the sublime. That would have reinforced the tendency toward dissociation [...] He taught them as a means of connecting people to their own humanity [...] While he did encourage beginning with mindfulness of the body and progressing through feelings to the mind, he also taught that all four foci existed simultaneously and that to privilege any one of them over another reinforced a tendency toward clinging [i.e., attachment].<sup>29</sup>

Like Mahasi *vipassana*, Epstein refers to the *Satipatthana Sutta* as an authoritative text on what the Buddha taught as his meditation teachings. This choiceless awareness of the four

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<sup>23</sup> Epstein, 124-125.

<sup>24</sup> Epstein, 129.

<sup>25</sup> Epstein, 139-140.

<sup>26</sup> Epstein, 16-17.

<sup>27</sup> Epstein, 87, 125.

<sup>28</sup> Epstein, 139-140.

<sup>29</sup> Epstein, 133.

foundations/establishments as four foci of possible phenomenological experience is also consistent with Mahasi *vipassana* teachings on bare attention to whatever phenomena arises in one's awareness without privileging one category of experience over the other.

Epstein's presentation of the Buddha's *satipatthana* teachings can be seen as a trauma-informed existential-humanist interpretation of the Mahasi *satipatthana* teachings. Epstein presents *satipatthana* practice as a path of "dry insight" that does not involve meditative absorption. He presents the goal of meditation as insight into the nature of reality resulting in greater acceptance of existential experience. However, unlike Mahasi *vipassana*, Epstein does not state that the goal of Buddhist meditation is to uproot the ten fetters (*samyojana*) that cause rebirth. Instead, he states that the goal is to be able to accept the inevitable pain that comes with being alive and to rest in a non-dual awareness of embodied experience. As a psychiatrist he grounds human experience in psychoanalytic developmental psychology and interpersonal neurobiology. The self is seen as a relational, psychological, social, and biological construct. He therefore presents the Buddha's teachings on the First Noble Truth, right view, and right mindfulness as a modern and scientific scholastic doctrine of existential humanism. It can be seen as a Buddhist-informed psychodynamic and neurobiological scholastic doctrine of naturalism. According to the third edition of the *New Oxford American Dictionary* "naturalism is the philosophical belief that everything arises from natural properties and causes, and supernatural or spiritual explanations are excluded or discounted."<sup>30</sup>

Treleaven's dissertation and Epstein's book discussed above are the longest single-author publications to date in the dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. The 2015 edited volume *Mindfulness-Oriented Interventions for Trauma: Integrating Contemplative*

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<sup>30</sup> "Naturalism," *New Oxford American Dictionary 3rd Edition*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) Angus Stevenson and Christine A. Lindberg.

*Practices* co-edited by mental health clinicians John Briere, Victoria Follette, and Deborah Rozelle, is the largest multi-authored publication to date in the dialogue.<sup>31</sup> Briere wrote the first chapter entitled *Pain and Suffering: A Synthesis of Buddhist and Western Approaches to Trauma*.<sup>32</sup> He repeats the themes that he and Scott put forward in *Principles of Trauma Therapy*... and that Epstein put forward in the *The Trauma of Everyday Life*. Briere states that life inevitably involves pain and that traumatizing events are extreme forms of pain. He states that mindfulness practice can help clients accept pain and let go of reactions to it via greater affect regulation, metacognitive awareness, and existential insight. Briere's chapter is the first of three chapters in the first section of the book. The second is by WVM Dharma teacher Brach and the third is by the WVM developers of Mindful Self Compassion, Christopher Germer and Kristin Neff.

The contributors to the volume represent scholar practitioners from: the WVM, third-wave cognitive behavioral therapies, Focusing, Internal Family Systems (IFS), various somatic trauma therapy approaches, and the field of interpersonal neurobiology in general.<sup>33</sup> Most of the chapters are explicitly or implicitly based in the WVM understanding of Buddhist meditation and secular mindfulness. Exceptions are psychiatrist Michael Schwartz and psychologist Flint Sparks' comparison of the Self in IFS with the teachings on Buddha Nature from Mahayana Buddhism; Lewis and Rozelle's analysis of trauma from Gelugpa teachings on emptiness; and psychiatrist James Hopper and psychotherapist Jenny Phillips' discussion of the effectiveness of

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<sup>31</sup> Follette et al., *Mindfulness-Oriented Interventions for Trauma*.

<sup>32</sup> Briere, John, "Pain and Suffering: A Synthesis of Buddhist and Western Approaches to Trauma," in *Mindfulness-Oriented Interventions for Trauma: Integrating Contemplative Practices*, ed. John Briere, Victoria Follette, and Deborah Rozelle (New York: Guilford Press, 2015), 11–30.

<sup>33</sup> Third wave behavioral therapies include Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) among others. The first wave is B.F. Skinner's behavioral psychology. The second wave is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). The third wave is characterized by including metacognitive awareness through mindfulness practice which focuses on the function of thoughts from a detached view versus the content of thoughts in CBT.

Goenka Vipassana (GV) in prison populations.<sup>34</sup> Lewis and Rozelle's chapter is the only chapter that discusses rebirth and liberation from rebirth. As such it is the only chapter that takes seriously the traditional Buddhist worldview of samsara and nirvana. Even though Hopper and Phillips' chapter is focused on GV, they do not discuss the links of dependent origination, nor do they discuss in depth the details of GV practice and how it differs from WVM practice.<sup>35</sup> The links of dependent origination are never discussed in the book. The only time dependent origination is brought up is when Briere presents it as a complex theory of causes and conditions and as an existential insight into material and psycho-social interdependence.<sup>36</sup>

Levine co-authored a 2015 journal article entitled *Somatic Experiencing: Using Interoception and Proprioception as Core Elements of Trauma Therapy*.<sup>37</sup> The authors present SE as a relatively new approach to trauma that focuses on “bottom-up processing” by working with body sensation.<sup>38</sup> They depict more traditional cognitive approaches as focused on processing memories through working with emotions and cognitive narratives. The authors define trauma in neurobiological terms as a nervous system imbalanced by overwhelming experience resulting in frustrated instinctual drives. They argue that to heal trauma the instinctual drives need to be completed to bring the nervous system back into balance. They posit that interoception—visceral awareness of internal body sensations—and proprioception—kinesthetic awareness of body posture and movement—are the two core foci of awareness that clients need to get in touch with to skillfully work with the instinctual drives and metabolize trauma.<sup>39</sup> They present a composite case study to explain the SE practices of resourcing, pendulation, and

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<sup>34</sup> Follette et al., *Mindfulness-Oriented Interventions for Trauma*.

<sup>35</sup> Follette et al., chap. 7, 8, 21.

<sup>36</sup> Briere, John, “Pain and Suffering,” 22-23, 26.

<sup>37</sup> Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau, “Somatic Experiencing.”

<sup>38</sup> Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau, 1.

titration. They describe the release of excess energy stored in the nervous system from traumatic events as “discharge.”<sup>40</sup> They describe allowing the body to complete thwarted defensive or flight movements from past traumatic events as “biological completion.”<sup>41</sup>

The authors posit that SE theory and practice can be used to better explain what is happening in mindfulness meditation and how to use it to recognize and respond to trauma. According to the authors,

We believe that the sophisticated and precise theories and techniques of SE offer a way of understanding the processes that occur during mindfulness meditation, both the beneficial mental, emotional and physiological effects of mindfulness meditation and the flooding or dissociation that can occur when traumatic memories surface. In addition, SE can suggest ways in which mindfulness meditation practices could be modified to enable meditators to process traumatic material, and traumatized people to use mindfulness-based techniques to help them recover.<sup>42</sup>

As will be discussed in chapter four, GV like SE makes body sensation the primary focus of attention. The GV practice of mindfulness of breathing functions similarly to SE resourcing. The GV bodyscan functions similarly to SE pendulation. The GV release of stored habit energies (*sankharas*) functions similarly to SE discharge. Given these apparent substantial correlations between SE and GV, one would assume that Levine and the co-authors of this 2015 article assume that WVM teachings on *satipatthana* is what is meant by “mindfulness meditation.” One would assume that Levine and his co-authors are unaware of the GV *vipassana* teachings on the five links of dependent origination and on *satipatthana*. The article reads like a response to Treleaven’s dissertation and to Compson’s article which both call for the WVM to integrate SE theory and practice into its *satipatthana* theory and practice.

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<sup>40</sup> Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau, 8.

<sup>41</sup> Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau, 1.

Treleaven's 2018 book *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness: Practices for Safe and Transformative Healing* provides an approach to mindfulness practice that integrates WVM teachings on *satipatthana* with SE theory and practice. According to Treleaven the four establishments are,

- Body ([*kaya*] the flow of transient physical sensations)
- Feelings or sensations (*vedanā*; the tone of pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral sensory experiences, including mental and emotional experiences)
- Mind (*citta*; emotions and mental states; one's mindset or state of mind)
- Dharma ([*Dhamma*] broadly speaking, the interrelation of all things; patterns over time)<sup>43</sup>

Treleaven's presentation of *satipatthana* is generally consistent with the WVM's existential humanist interpretation of the *Satipatthana Sutta*. The only significant difference is his presentation of the fourth establishment as material interdependence instead of the three marks of existence. Treleaven supplements WVM *satipatthana* teachings with five principles from somatic trauma therapy. Those principles are to “stay within the window of tolerance,” “shift attention to support stability,” “keep the body in mind,” “practice in relationship,” and “understand social context.”<sup>44</sup> Staying within the window means not to engage with experience that is overwhelming. Shifting attention means if unpleasant body sensations are becoming too intense, shift attention to neutral or pleasant body sensations or sensory experience. Keeping the body in mind means to always maintain awareness of body sensation and connect that to the other three establishments. Practice in relationship means to make use of the social engagement drive through interpersonal interaction to prevent overactivation. Understanding social context means to be aware of issues regarding power and difference.

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<sup>43</sup> David A. Treleaven, *Trauma-Sensitive Mindfulness: Practices for Safe and Transformative Healing* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018).

<sup>44</sup> Treleaven, chap. 5-9, Kindle.

Gleig's 2019 book *American Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Modernity* includes a history of how Kornfield, Brach, and other WVM teachers associated with Spirit Rock have integrated somatic trauma therapy theory and practice into their WVM Buddhist theory and practice. According to Gleig, Spirit Rock was founded by Kornfield and other WVM teachers who were interested in integrating theory and practice from other spiritual traditions and from psychotherapy into WVM theory and practice.<sup>45</sup> This included offering less intense forms of meditation practice that were more connected to daily householder life in addition to still offering intensive meditation retreats.<sup>46</sup> Gleig refers to this more open approach as the "West Coast Vipassana" style of the Insight tradition [WVM] in contrast to the "East Coast Vipassana" style of IMS that has stayed focused on Mahasi *vipassana* teachings and intensive retreats.

Gleig states that the rationale for the West Coast Vipassana teachers to integrate trauma therapy theory and practice into WVM teachings was based on their assessment of the inability of WVM *vipassana* meditation to deal with the full range of human suffering. According to Gleig,

The inability of meditation to act as a total cure for all has led Kornfield and others to advocate for the integration of meditation with other healing practices. This "meditation-plus" approach has led to a number of innovations, such as incorporating trauma theory into retreat settings. The Insight teacher training program started at Spirit Rock, for example, requires that trainees complete one year of psychotherapeutic training, and Peter Levine's "somatic experiencing," a psychosomatic approach to healing trauma, is one of three optional therapeutic modalities.<sup>47</sup>

According to Gleig

The responsibility for the spiritual direction of the center falls to the Spirit Rock Teachers Council [...] a collective of twenty-nine lay teachers and two Western

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<sup>45</sup> Some of the other traditions include the Thai Forest monastic teacher Ajhan Cha, non-dual teachings from Advaita Vedanta, and tantric teachings from Mahayana Buddhism.

<sup>46</sup> Gleig, *American Dharma*, chap. 4, Kindle.

<sup>47</sup> Gleig, chap. 4, Kindle.

Monastics. [...] One of the most striking characteristics of the Teachers Council is the considerable percentage of teachers who are also practicing psychotherapists.<sup>48</sup>

Gleig's research seems to indicate that the Spirit Rock Teachers Council is cognizant of the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. and that the Council agrees with the dialogue's proposals so far. The Council appears to have taken institutional action on trauma based on a combination of the scholarly dialogue's research and their own institutional wisdom as WVM Dharma teachers and psychotherapists. As a result of that action, some practitioners training at Spirit Rock to become WVM Dharma teachers are now undergoing the first year of the three-year SE training as part of their WVM Dharma teacher training. This marks a degree of institutional merging in the U.S. between the WVM and the tradition of trauma therapy. It also points to an ecosystem of practice that includes WVM retreats and trauma therapy sessions.

This discussion of the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. from 2012 until present demonstrates that it has mainly been between the WVM and the field of trauma therapy. The WVM is presenting an existential humanist interpretation of the Mahasi *vipassana* dry insight approach to *satipatthana* practice. The dialogue is centered on commentary on the *Satipatthana Sutta* as the core mindfulness teachings of the Buddha. These teachings are being critically correlated with psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral, and interpersonal neurobiological theory and practice. The worldview of scientific materialism is the prevailing worldview. This has resulted in the Buddha being depicted as a mindfulness-based existential philosopher teachings a doctrine of naturalism. The Four Noble Truths are presented as a naturalistic philosophy of life and a mindfulness-based cognitive-behavioral/psychodynamic therapy. Interpersonal neurobiology and somatic trauma therapy are presented as needed

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<sup>48</sup> Gleig, chap. 4, Kindle.

supplements to Buddhist *satipatthana* practice. Commentary on the *Satipatthana Sutta* is a central thread that runs through the dialogue.

### **The Historical Context of the Dialogue Between Buddhism and Trauma Therapy**

The scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. represents the coming together of two different genres of modern publications. One is composed of articles and books on trauma therapy from the fields of psychiatry, psychology, and neuroscience. Another is composed of articles and books on *satipatthana* meditation based on texts from the Pali Canon. The former traces its roots back to the anticlerical movement in France at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which saw the establishment of the academic fields of psychiatry, psychology, and neuroscience. The latter traces its roots back to the revival of *satipatthana* meditation in Thailand, Burma, and Sri Lanka at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of anticolonial movements in those regions. This movement resulted in different lay and monastic lineages of *satipatthana* practice becoming established.

The European anticlerical movement sought to replace the authority of Christian priests with the authority of psychiatrists, psychologists, and neurologists. The Asian anticolonial movements sought to preserve the authority of monastic and lay Buddhist teachers against the authority of Christian missionaries and colonial officials, the latter whose ideology was based in the European scientific community. As the previous section of this literature review demonstrated, the WVM and the tradition of trauma therapy in the U.S. are, to a certain extent, in the process of merging with each other. This merger is based in large part on the WVM's existential humanist interpretation and presentation of *satipatthana* teachings from the *Satipatthana Sutta*. This section of the literature review will provide historical context to this

apparent merger as well as to other *satipatthana* traditions of theory and practice whose teachings have not yet been considered by the dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S.

### **The Origins of Trauma Therapy**

In the first chapter of *Trauma and Recovery* Herman traces the origins of trauma therapy to the work of Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), William James (1842-1910), Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), and Pierre Janet (1859-1947) at the Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris that Charcot was in charge of on behalf of the government of the French Third Republic.<sup>49</sup> According to Wikipedia,

Born in Paris, Charcot worked and taught at the famous Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital for 33 years. His reputation as an instructor drew students from all over Europe. In 1882, he established a neurology clinic at Salpêtrière, which was the first of its kind in Europe. Charcot was a part of the French neurological tradition and studied under, and greatly revered, Duchenne de Boulogne.<sup>50</sup>

A central argument in Herman's book is that it requires a sociopolitical movement that takes the suffering of women and children seriously to provide the physical, social, and psychological space for trauma to be recognized and responded to in society.<sup>51</sup> She argues that the anticlerical movement behind the establishment of the French Third Republic (1870-1940) was the first such social movement in Western society. The elite bourgeoisie men behind the movement sought to win over the support of women in French society from the Catholic Church. A key strategy to do this was for the bourgeoisie men of science to replace the feudal religious interpretation of what hysteria was in women and how to respond to it with a modern scientific interpretation of what hysteria was in women and how to respond to it. According to Herman, "Charcot's formulations

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<sup>49</sup> Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, chap. 1.

<sup>50</sup> Wikipedia, s.v. "Jean-Martin Charcot," last modified July 16, 2022, 21:11, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jean-Martin\\_Charcot&oldid=1090902956](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jean-Martin_Charcot&oldid=1090902956).

<sup>51</sup> Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 8.

of hysteria offered a scientific explanation for phenomena such as demonic possession states, witchcraft, exorcism, and religious ecstasy.”<sup>52</sup> Thus, a central intention of the anticlerical movement was to replace priests responding to perceived spiritual maladies with medical clinicians responding to perceived neurological and or psychological pathologies. Herman describes the Salpêtrière under Charcot’s administration as a “temple of modern science” where for “a brief decade men of science listened to women with a devotion and a respect unparalleled before or since.”<sup>53</sup>

Charcot and his students were trying to discover the scientific cause of hysteria in women. Herman states that by “the mid 1890s [after their work with Charcot at the Salpêtrière,] Janet in France and Freud, with his collaborator Joseph Breuer, in Vienna had arrived independently at strikingly similar formulations: hysteria was a condition caused by psychological trauma.”<sup>54</sup> Herman states that Janet and Freud were able to recognize trauma through their methodology of psychological analysis based on talking to patients in order to bring up and release suppressed memories from their unconscious. Herman states that Freud, “followed the thread the furthest, and invariably this led him into an exploration of the sexual lives of women.”<sup>55</sup> She cites Freud’s 1896 paper *The Aetiology of Hysteria* as the urtext of trauma therapy based on his discovery of sexual abuse as the main cause of hysteria in women.

According to Herman,

Repeatedly his patients told him of sexual assault, abuse, and incest. Following back the thread of memory, Freud and his patients uncovered major traumatic events of childhood concealed beneath the more recent, often relatively trivial experiences that

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<sup>52</sup> Herman, 15.

<sup>53</sup> Herman, 11.

Herman and her colleagues such as Bessel Van der Kolk who reestablished the discipline of trauma therapy within Western psychiatry and psychology have fought a long and protracted battle against the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to get PTSD to be recognized in the Diagnostics and Statistics Manual (DSM). Acute trauma has been admitted but complex trauma is still not in the DSM.

<sup>54</sup> Herman, 12.

<sup>55</sup> Herman, 13.

had actually triggered the onset of hysterical symptoms. By 1896 Freud believed he had found the source. In a report on eighteen case studies, entitled *The Aetiology of Hysteria*, he made a dramatic claim: “I therefore put forward the thesis that at the bottom of every case of hysteria there are *one or more occurrences of premature sexual experience*, occurrences which belong to the earliest years of childhood, but which can be reproduced through the work of psycho-analysis in spite of the intervening decades. I believe this is an important finding, the discovery of a *caput Nili* in neuropathology.”<sup>56</sup>

Given the widespread prevalence of hysteria in women in Europe during Freud’s time his discovery implied that sexual abuse of girls was widespread in European society. The scientific community and the wider society in Western Europe dismissed this as not being possible. Their dismissal of Freud’s discovery left him professionally and socially isolated at the beginning of his professional career and at the beginning of his project to establish psychoanalysis as a new discipline within Western medicine. He therefore recanted his view that hysteria in women was caused by childhood sexual abuse and began to focus on more abstract theories. According to Herman, “out of the ruins of the traumatic theory of hysteria, Freud created psychoanalysis. The dominant psychological theory of the next century was founded in denial of women’s reality.”<sup>57</sup>

Herman recounts how the social context for Western European and U.S. cultures to recognize trauma reemerged later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century through study of the phenomena of “shell shock” in WWI and WWII soldiers. Another factor was the suffragette movement for women’s liberation which gained women the right to vote and to become medical professionals. In addition, the civil rights movement, the women’s liberation movement, and the antiwar movement during the 1960s in the U.S. created a critical mass where trauma was again recognized by the medical community. The late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century saw the

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<sup>56</sup> Herman, 13.

S. Freud, “The Aetiology of Hysteria,” in *Standard Edition*, vol 3, trans, J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1962) 203.

<sup>57</sup> Herman, 14.

publication of seminal books on trauma. Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*... is one.<sup>58</sup> It is centered on relational psychodynamic psychiatry and psychology. Briere and Scott's *Principles of Trauma Therapy*... represents a contemporary psychiatric understanding of trauma in line with Herman's work.<sup>59</sup> Levine's books *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* and *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness* introduced a somatic approach to trauma based on the polyvagal theory.<sup>60</sup> Bessel Van der Kolk's *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma* blends the psychiatric and the somatic approaches to trauma.<sup>61</sup> Pat Ogden, Elaine Miller-Karas, and Francine Shapiro have all published books on the somatic approach.<sup>62</sup> Dan Siegel's *Mindsight*... presents an interpersonal neurobiological understanding of implicit and explicit memory in relation to trauma based on a triune evolutionary model of the brain as reptilian, old mammalian, and new mammalian.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Origins of the Western Vipassana Movement**

The WVM is based on theory and practice drawn from the Mahasi *vipassana*, GV, and the Ajhan Cha (1918-1992) Thai Forest *satipatthana* traditions of meditation practice. It also draws from discourses in the Pali Canon and Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* that have been translated into English by Western monks in the Sri Lankan tradition on behalf of the Buddhist Publication Society. The Mahasi *vipassana* lineage provides the core WVM teachings on *satipatthana* practice. The *Satipatthana Sutta* and the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta* are the core

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<sup>58</sup> Herman.

<sup>59</sup> Briere and Scott, *Principles of Trauma Therapy*.

<sup>60</sup> Peter A. Levine, *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1997); Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice*.

<sup>61</sup> Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015).

<sup>62</sup> Pat Ogden et al., *Trauma and the Body: A Sensorimotor Approach to Psychotherapy* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006); Miller-Karas, *Building Resilience to Trauma*; Francine Shapiro, *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy, Third Edition: Basic Principles, Protocols, and Procedures* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2017).

<sup>63</sup> Siegel, *Mindsight*.

discourses from the Pali Canon that the WVM's Mahasi *vipassana* practice is based on. The Mahasi *vipassana* lineage has also provided the WVM with the social context of the meditation center for intensive retreats and the practice schedule that alternates between periods of sitting meditation and walking meditation. The *Visuddhimagga* has provided the WVM with its overall theoretical context to understand the Four Noble Truths and *satipatthana* practice with—although from a mainly existential humanist perspective. GV has provided the WVM with the bodyscan practice which it has repackaged as MBSR.<sup>64</sup> The WVM replaced the GV contextualization of the bodyscan using the teachings on the links of dependent origination with the Mahasi *vipassana* teachings on *satipatthana*.

The Ajhan Cha Thai Forest tradition has provided Spirit Rock with a looser retreat structure and teaching style grounded more in the experience of daily householder life. This has been held in dynamic tension with the stricter Mahasi *vipassana* retreat structure and teaching style maintained by IMS. The WVM teachers are almost all lay teachers, many of whom are also psychotherapists. The understanding of the relationship between celibacy and other monastic renunciant practices with *satipatthana* practice is not discussed in WVM teachings. Relatedly, the traditional goal of uprooting the ten fetters (*samyojana*) that cause rebirth is downplayed or not discussed.

IMS was co-founded in 1975 by Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, Jack Kornfield, and Jacqueline Mandel in Barre Massachusetts.<sup>65</sup> In the early 1970s Goldstein and Salzberg learned Mahasi *vipassana* from Anagarika Munindra (1914-2003) in Bodh Gaya. Munindra was a direct

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<sup>64</sup> Daniel M. Stuart, "Insight Transformed: Coming to Terms with Mindfulness in South Asian and Global Frames," *Religions of South Asia* 11, no. 2–3 (2017): 158–81, 173–175.

<sup>65</sup> Wikipedia, s.v. "Insight Meditation Society," last modified September 5, 2022, 5:03, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Insight\\_Meditation\\_Society&oldid=1003637893](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Insight_Meditation_Society&oldid=1003637893); Ann Gleig, "From Theravada to Tantra: The Making of an American Tantric Buddhism?," *Contemporary Buddhism* 14, no. 2 (2013): 226.

student of Mahasi Syadaw who he trained with in Burma. Kornfield ordained as a monk in Thailand in the late 1960s and trained with Ajhan Cha at his forest monastery in northeast Thailand. Kornfield then went to Burma and trained directly under Mahasi at his meditation center in Rangoon. Former Harvard psychology professor turned U.S. counterculture spiritual teacher Ram Dass (1931-2019), aka Richard Alpert, also learned Mahasi *vipassana* from Munindra in Bodh Gaya. When Ram Dass asked Munindra what he could study to learn more about the theory and practice of *vipassana* meditation, Munindra recommended he read Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* which had been translated into English by the Buddhist Publication Society.<sup>66</sup> According to Ram Dass,

I asked to learn more, and he introduced me to the *Visuddhimagga*, part of Buddhism's scholastic tradition. Finally, I, a Western psychologist was truly humbled intellectually. For I saw what psyche and logos was really about. Here, in this one volume, was an exquisitely articulated and inclusive category system of mental conditions, plus a philosophy and method for extricating your awareness from the tyranny of your own mind.<sup>67</sup>

Ram Dass had left his position as a psychology professor at Harvard, where he and Timothy Leary (1920-1996) had been experimenting with LSD, to go to India in 1967.<sup>68</sup> He was on a quest to find another system of thought that could better explain his psychedelic experiences. Daniel Goleman, who earned a PhD in clinical psychology at Harvard, went to India and Sri Lanka on pre- and postdoctoral fellowships to study meditation.<sup>69</sup> He connected with Ram Dass and Goldstein in Bodh Gaya. Like Goldstein and Ram Dass, Goleman also learned Mahasi *vipassana* from Munindra, and like Ram Dass, he was also deeply impressed by the

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<sup>66</sup> Bhadantacariya Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification: Visuddhimagga*, trans. Bhikkhu Ñanamoli (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 2010).

<sup>67</sup> Daniel Goleman, *The Meditative Mind: The Varieties of Meditative Experience* (New York: Tarcher Perigee, 1996), foreword, Kindle.

<sup>68</sup> Goleman, foreword, Kindle.

<sup>69</sup> Goleman, introduction, Kindle.

*Visuddhimagga*. His first book, *The Varieties of Meditative Experience* published in 1977, provides an overview of different Asian meditation systems. It features the *Visuddhimagga* as an example of one of the most sophisticated Asian meditation systems of theory and practice, and as a “map for inner space” to compare other Asian meditation traditions with.<sup>70</sup>

Goldstein, Salzberg, Ram Dass, and Goleman also sat *vipassana* courses with Goenka in Bodh Gaya starting in 1970.<sup>71</sup> So did Munindra. Even though Munindra started with Mahasi and taught Mahasi *vipassana*, he later became drawn to the teachings of Goenka’s teacher U Ba Khin (1899-1971).<sup>72</sup> He wanted to sit courses directly with U Ba Khin but U Ba Khin would not allow it because he (U Ba Khin) was a lay teacher and Munindra was already a student of Mahasi, a monk. U Ba Khin did not want to upset Burmese social decorum which would frown upon a lay teacher teaching a student of a monk. However, U Ba Khin had developed a spiritual technology that would allow him to transmit his spiritual energy at a distance from Burma to Goenka’s courses in Bodh Gaya, so Munindra availed himself of that opportunity.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the *vipassana* scene in Bodh Gaya was a mixture of Mahasi *vipassana* theory and practice and GV theory and practice.

The meditation retreats at IMS during the early days also saw a mixture of Mahasi *vipassana* theory and practice and U Ba Khin/GV theory and practice. Goldstein and Salzberg taught Mahasi *vipassana*. Ruth Denison and Robert Hover taught U Ba Khin *vipassana*.<sup>74</sup> Denison and Hover, like Goenka, had been empowered by U Ba Khin to teach his style of *vipassana*. It was during a three-month U Ba Khin *vipassana* retreat at IMS that Jon Kabat-Zinn

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<sup>70</sup> Goleman, Part One The Visuddhimagga: A Map for Inner Space, 243-748.

<sup>71</sup> Daniel M. Stuart, *S. N. Goenka: Emissary of Insight* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala, 2020), 88.

<sup>72</sup> Stuart, 286.

<sup>73</sup> Stuart, 74-75, 89-91.

<sup>74</sup> Stuart, 106.

came up with the idea of MBSR.<sup>75</sup> The core practice of MBSR is the U-Ba-Khin/GV bodyscan repackaged as a secular medical treatment. As time went on IMS exclusively taught Mahasi *vipassana* and Kornfield opened Spirit Rock with other IMS teachers to teach his blend of Mahasi *vipassana* and Ajhan Cha style meditation.

In addition to the *Satipatthana Sutta*, *Mahsatipatthana Sutta* and *Visuddhimagga*, two other root texts for the WVM are Mahasi's meditation manual entitled *Practical Insight Meditation: Basic and Progressive Stages*, and Nyanaponika Thera's (1901-1994) commentary on *satipatthana* texts in the Pali Canon entitled *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation: Satipatthana A Handbook of Mental Training Based on the Buddha's Way of Mindfulness*.<sup>76</sup> Nyanaponika was a Jewish German who had fled Nazi Germany in the 1930s with his mother to Vienna.<sup>77</sup> He then emigrated to Sri Lanka to become a monk. He and his fellow German emigree monk in Sri Lanka, Nyanatiloka Thera (1878-1957), were the only foreign monastics invited to the Sixth Buddhist Council in Burma (1954-1956).<sup>78</sup> The council was sponsored by Prime Minister U Nu (1907-1995) on behalf of the newly formed Burmese government. U Nu appointed Mahasi to play a central role in the council. Nyanaponika stayed in Burma to learn *vipassana* meditation from Mahasi. He then went back to Sri Lanka and co-founded the Buddhist Publication Society (BPS) which became a hub of Western monastics engaged in mediation and translation of Pali texts. BPS translated and published Mahasi's manual.

Mahasi's teacher was Mingun Sayadaw (1870-1955). Mingun was recommended to base his *vipassana* practice on the *Mahsatipatthana Sutta* by a monk he met in the Sagiang Hills

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<sup>75</sup> Daniel M. Stuart, "Insight Transformed," *Religions of South Asia* 11, no. 2-3 (2017): 173-174.

<sup>76</sup> Sayadaw, *Practical Insight Meditation: Basic and Progressive Stages*; Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation: Satipatthana: A Handbook of Mental Training Based on the Buddha's Way of Mindfulness* (York Beach, Maine: Samuel Weiser, 1973).

<sup>77</sup> Wikipedia, s.v. "Nyanaponika Thera," last modified July 22, 2022, 11:40, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nyanaponika\\_Thera&oldid=984157936](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Nyanaponika_Thera&oldid=984157936).

<sup>78</sup> "Nyanaponika Thera."

outside of Mandalay.<sup>79</sup> Mingun set up one of the first meditation centers in Burma that taught lay people. He trained at one point under Monyin Sayadaw (1872-1964), a student of Ledi Sayadaw, the founder of the GV lineage. But as will be seen below, the Mahasi *vipassana* style of practice is so different from what Ledi and the other teachers in the GV lineage taught that Mingun should be considered the head of a separate lineage and not a branch of the Ledi lineage.

### **The Origins of the Goenka Vipassana Lineage**

The founder of the GV lineage is the scholar monk and meditation master Ledi Sayadaw (1846-1923). Religious studies scholar Erik Braun's has written a biography of Ledi entitled *The Birth of Insight: Meditation, Modern Buddhism, and the Burmese Monk Ledi Sayadaw*. According to Braun, Ledi was the prime initiator of the mass populist movement in Burma that called for lay people to study and practice the *Dhamma* in order to preserve Buddhism against colonialism during the British occupation of Burma.<sup>80</sup> Ledi was born December 24, 1846, in Sainpyin village in the Lower Chindwin River Valley outside of Mandalay. When he was 10, he went to the local village monastery to receive the traditional education for boys. He ordained as a novice at age 15. In 1869, when he was 23, he went to Thanjaun Monastery in Mandalay, one of the top royal monasteries in the capital city of the kingdom. Burma at that time was ruled by King Mindon (1808-1878) who substantially supported Buddhism as part of his campaign against British colonialism. When Ledi arrived at Thanjaun the British had already taken over Lower Burma, the southern half of the kingdom, in the Second Anglo-Burmese War (1852-1853). Mandalay was in the remaining free territory of Upper Burma in the north.

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<sup>79</sup> Erik Braun, *The Birth of Insight: Meditation, Modern Buddhism, and the Burmese Monk Ledi Sayadaw* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 6, 160-162.

<sup>80</sup> Braun, 3.

In 1871 King Mindon convened the Fifth Buddhist Council in Mandalay to, as Braun puts it, “reassert the stability and superiority of royal Burma by showing the strength of Buddhism.”<sup>81</sup> In 1868, as part of the preparations for the council, King Mindon had the entire Pali Canon (*Tipitaka*) carved into 729 marble slabs using Burmese script and placed them around the Kuthodaw Monastery at the foot of Mandalay Hill.<sup>82</sup> Ledi’s arrival at Thanjaun Monastery in 1869, when he was 24, was thus at a time when the King and the monastic sangha in Burma were girding their Buddhist scholastic and spiritual loins against the impending British occupation of Upper Burma.

Ledi was in Mandalay from 1869 to 1883 prior to the British invasion of Upper Burma. During that time, he was mentored by a layman Buddhist scholar and court official Hpo Hliang (1830-1885). Hliang was the Minister of the Interior and a close friend and advisor to King Mingdon. He wrote a book published in 1875 entitled *Meditation on the Body* (*Kayanupasana*) that critically correlated Western human anatomy from an Italian textbook on the subject with Buddhist *abidhamma* teachings on the body (*kaya*). According to Braun’s discussion of the book, Hliang

breaks down the human body into its component parts as they are detailed in Buddhist Abidhamma texts. In it he discusses the twenty-eight most basic elements of matter (*rūpa*) and the thirty-two parts of the body, as well as the *kalāpas*, the subatomic particles that comprise physical matter.<sup>83</sup>

One of Ledi’s main areas of research in the *abidhamma* was on the four elements as body sensations and the fact that each *kalapa* was made up of the four elements.<sup>84</sup> This became a

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<sup>81</sup> Braun, 24.

<sup>82</sup> Braun, 25.

<sup>83</sup> Braun, 31.

<sup>84</sup> Ledi Sayadaw, *The Manual of Light & The Manual of the Path to Higher Knowledge: Two Expositions of the Buddha’s Teaching* (Onalaska, WA: Pariyatti Publishing, 2020), 24-34.

The Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism is divided into three sections, namely the *Suttapitaka* (basket of discourses), the *Vinayapitaka* (basket of monastic rules), and the *Abhidhammapitaka* (basket of higher *dhamma* or higher teachings.) The *Suttapitaka* primarily contains discourses attributed to the Buddha and his senior disciples. It holds

major element of his *vipassana* teachings. King Mindon died in 1878. Ledi left Mandalay in 1883 for a monastery in Monywa near his home village after Thanjaun Monastery had burned down. Hliang died in 1885, the same year that the British invaded Upper Burma. In 1887 Ledi set up a forest monastery in the Ledi Forest—hence his name Ledi Sayadaw—near his home village where he began to practice *samatha* meditation (calming meditation, i.e., *jhana*) and *vipassana* meditation (insight meditation). He also continued to study, teach, and write.

Ledi's two main weapons against British colonialism were his oral and written teachings on the *abhidhamma* and on *vipassana* meditation. Ledi wrote a book in Pali in 1897 entitled *Paramatthadīpanī* (Manual of Ultimates) which was a commentary on the *Abhidhammatthasangaha* (Compendium of the Ultimates) (referred from now on as the *Sangaha*).<sup>85</sup> The *Sangaha* is considered by Burmese and Sri Lankan scholasticism to be an indispensable and prerequisite guide to the *Abhidhammapitaka* that offers a concise and thorough summary of its content. Ledi's *Paramatthadīpanī* was published in 1901. In 1903 Ledi wrote the *Summary of the Ultimates* (*Paramattha sam khip*) in Burmese which was a poetic summary of the *Sangaha*.<sup>86</sup> According to Braun it “focused on giving laypeople an overall Abidhamma literacy by translating the *Abhidhammatthasangaha* into easy-to-understand Burmese.”<sup>87</sup> It was first published in 1904. Ledi argued that since the British had overthrown the Burmese monarchy, the traditional maintainer and defender of monastic Buddhism in Burma, it was up to the society as a whole to defend the religion by studying the *abidhamma* and practicing

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most of the early strata of texts in the canon as well as later strata. The *Abhidhammapitaka* primarily contains a highly sophisticated analysis and systemization of the teachings in the *Suttapitaka*. It tends to hold later strata of texts in the Pali Canon but also contains some early strata texts. It provides a detailed phenomenology of consciousness and analysis of materiality. Theravada scholasticism in Sri Lanka and Burma, especially Burma, has placed a high level of focus on the *Abhidhammapitaka*.

<sup>85</sup> Braun, *The Birth of Insight*, chap. 2.

<sup>86</sup> Braun, 104.

<sup>87</sup> Braun, 103.

meditation instead of just the monastics. He organized recitation groups of the *Summary* all over Burma by all walks of life. For those that were ready, he advocated for the study of the *abidhamma* as a preparation to engage in *vipassana* meditation.

In 1904 Ledi also wrote *Manual on Breath Meditation (Anapanadipani)* which was a commentary on the 16 exercises of mindfulness of breathing (*anapanasati*) as presented in the Discourse on Mindfulness of Breathing (MN 118, *Anapanasati Sutta*).<sup>88</sup> According to Braun it is “one of the earliest how-to manuals of modern meditation that had a wide distribution” and “one of Ledi’s most extensive discussions of method.”<sup>89</sup> The 16 exercises are four sets of four exercises—known as the *four tetrads*—that use the contemplative structure of the four establishments of mindfulness (*satipatthana*) to teach mindfulness of breathing. The following table (Figure One) is Ajhan Sujato’s translation into English and concise paraphrasing of the 16 exercises of *anapanasati* and their relationship to the contemplative structure of *satipatthana*.

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<sup>88</sup> Ledi Sayadaw, *Manual of Mindfulness of Breathing: Anapana Dipani* (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 2000), 103.

<sup>89</sup> Braun, *The Birth of Insight*, 137-138.

Satipaṭṭhāna	Ānāpānāsati
Contemplation of the Body	Breathing long
	Breathing short
	Experiencing the whole body
	Tranquillizing the bodily activities
Contemplation of feelings	Experiencing rapture
	Experiencing bliss
	Experiencing mental activities
	Tranquilizing mental activities
Contemplation of the mind	Experiencing the mind
	Gladdening the mind
	Centering the mind in samādhi
	Releasing the mind
Contemplation of dhammas	Contemplating impermanence
	Contemplating fading of lust
	Contemplating cessation
	Contemplating relinquishment

Figure 1: The Sixteen Exercises of Mindfulness of Breathing in Relation to the Four Establishments of Mindfulness adapted from Ajhan Sujato's Table<sup>90</sup>

Ledi's *Anapanadipani* is a concise and accessible presentation of Buddhaghosa's teachings in the *Visuddhimagga* on *anapanasati* and on mindfulness of the body as mindfulness of the four elements in the body. Ledi's goal was to get as many lay people as possible to be literate in the *abidhamma* and to practice meditation. In order to make meditation practice more accessible he taught that it was permissible to just cultivate "access concentration" (*upacāra-samādhi*), as taught in the first tetrad of the four tetrads, and then skip to practicing *vipassana* meditation as taught in fourth tetrad.<sup>91</sup> This is known as the path of "dry insight" because it does not require practicing the *jhanas* before practicing *vipassana*.

Ledi taught that the second and third tetrads had to do with the *jhanas*. Ledi's understanding of *jhana* was based on the *Visuddhimagga* which taught that the *jhanas* were

<sup>90</sup> Sujato, *A History of Mindfulness*, 141-142.

<sup>91</sup> Ledi Sayadaw, *Manual of Mindfulness of Breathing*, 53.

states in which the practitioner is aware of a subtle mental image that arises from the breath known as the “counterpoint sign” (*paṭibhāga-nimitta*).<sup>92</sup> The practitioner enters *jhana* by shifting the focus of attention from the breath to the subtle mental image. According to this understanding, when the practitioner is in *jhana* they are *no longer aware* of their body and of their normal mental activities and so cannot practice *vipassana* meditation, i.e., looking deeply into the body and mind to gain insight into their impermanent, suffering, and no-self nature. As will be discussed below, Thai Forest monks Sujato and Thanissaro and their respective Thai Forest lineages have recovered what they see as an early Buddhist understanding of *jhana* in which the practitioner *is aware* of their whole body and mind. They argue that early Buddhist meditation teachings do not separate tranquility practice (*samatha bhavana*), i.e., *jhana*, from insight practice (*vipassana bhavana*).

One of Ledi’s top meditation students was the lay practitioner Saya Thetgyi (1873-1945), aka U Po Thet. He trained under Ledi and was empowered by him to teach not only lay people but monastics as well.<sup>93</sup> Empowering a lay person to teach monastics was a bold and revolutionary move by Ledi that was part of his populist anticolonial campaign to empower lay people to study the *Dhamma* and practice *vipassana*. U Thet together with his wife and sister-and-law set up a meditation center at their rice farm where they offered ten-day retreats to all walks of life. According to the GV history of the lineage, U Thet “taught simple farmers and labourers as well as those who were well-versed in the Pali texts. The village was not far from Rangoon, which was the capital of Burma under the British, so government employees and

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<sup>92</sup> Ledi Sayadaw, 34.

<sup>93</sup> Sayagyi U. Ba Khin and S. N. Goenka, *Sayagyi U Ba Khin Journal: A Collection Commemorating the Teaching of Sayagyi U Ba Khin* (Onalaska, WA: Vipassana Research Publications, 2017), 85-90.

urbanites, like U Ba Khin, also came.”<sup>94</sup> U Thet embodied Ledi’s vision of lay practitioners studying and practicing the *Dhamma* to maintain Buddhism under colonial rule.

When the Burmese attained independence in 1948, U Ba Khin was appointed first Accountant General under Prime Minister U Nu. He went on to head multiple departments in the government. According to Goenka’s account of U Ba Khin at that time,

For the next two decades, he was employed in various capacities in the government, most of the time holding two or more posts, each equivalent to the head of a department. At one time he served as head of three separate departments simultaneously for three years and, on another occasion, head of four departments for about one year.<sup>95</sup>

In 1950 U Ba Khin founded the Vipassana Association of the Accountant General’s Office and set up space for his students to meditate in the government office building where he worked. He taught mindfulness of breathing and the bodyscan to his students who were mainly lay government officials. U Ba Khin’s dual function as government minister and *vipassana* teacher is reminiscent of Hpo Hliang’s dual function in King Mindon’s court as royal advisor and *vipassana* teacher. In 1952 U Ba Khin established the International Meditation Center (IMC) to teach mindfulness of breathing and the bodyscan to the Burmese public at large and to students from abroad such as from Europe and the U.S. Like U Thet, he taught ten-day retreats.

U Ba Khin made contemplation of “feeling” (*vedana*)—understood as body sensation and not emotion—the main practice to contemplate impermanence (*anicca*) with. According to U Ba Khin in a discourse he wrote for foreign students entitled *The Essentials of Buddha-Dhamma in Meditative Practice*, sensation (*vedana*) that arises from contact (*phassa*) between the body and an object—either external or internal—is the best object for meditation as compared to sensation that arises from contact with the other five sense bases of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and mind.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Khin and Goenka, 89.

<sup>95</sup> Khin and Goenka, 9.

<sup>96</sup> Khin and Goenka, 36.

Like Ledi, U Ba Khin teaches awareness of sensation in the body for *vipassana* practice, but he puts emphasis on sensations as tiny particles (*kalapas*) instead of as the four elements. U Ba Khin taught that body and mind (*rupa* and *nama* respectively) were on a continuum. He taught that by practicing the bodyscan one can go from experiencing the gross solid sensations of the body to experiencing the body as *kalapas* experienced as wavelets of energy that are constantly arising and passing. He taught that this experience of the body as an energy field of *kalapas* arising and passing is called *bangha*. He defines *bangha* as “knowledge of the rapidly changing nature of *rupa* and *nama* as a swift current or stream of energy; in particular, clear awareness of the phase of dissolution.”<sup>97</sup> He taught that by focusing on this experience of *anicca* as the *kalapas* arising and passing, one can bring up and release the deeply rooted mental formations (*sankharas*) that cause rebirth.

Goenka, U Ba Khin’s most well-known student outside of Burma, was an industrialist living and working in Burma whose family came from India. He was empowered by U Ba Khin to teach after training with U Ba Khin at the IMC in Rangoon. He went back to India and taught courses in Bodh Gaya for some time. He eventually set up meditation centers in India and all over the world (at the time of this writing there are 233 centers).<sup>98</sup> Goenka established the Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) in 1985 in order to publish his teachings, contextualize them within the Ledi lineage, and conduct further research. The VRI is part of Dhamma Giri (*Dhamma* Mountain), the GV headquarters and large meditation center outside of Mumbai. Dhammagiri is a sizable complex that can offer multiple retreats at the same time and that can offer the full range of GV retreats from the standard 10-day to multi-month-long courses.

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<sup>97</sup> Khin and Goenka, 36.

<sup>98</sup> “Vipassana Meditation Directory of Centers,” accessed August 3, 2022, <https://www.dhamma.org/en-US/locations/directory>.

In 1987 the VRI published the book *Discourse Summaries* which contains edited transcriptions of Goenka's *Dhamma* talks that are played each night during the standard 10-day course.<sup>99</sup> In it, Goenka uses the teachings on the links of dependent origination to explain the Four Noble Truths and to explain the core theory behind the techniques of mindful breathing and the bodyscan.<sup>100</sup> In 1991 VRI published *Sayagi U Ba Khin Journal: A Collection Commemorating the Teaching of Sayagi U Ba Khin*.<sup>101</sup> This book gives the history of the lineage as well as direct teachings from U Ba Khin, Goenka, and other authors from the VRI. Among the many contributions in the collection are three articles listing VRI as the author entitled: *Vedanā and the Four Noble Truths*; *Vedanā in Patīccasamuppāda*; and *Vedanā in the Practice of Satipatthāna*.<sup>102</sup> In 1998 VRI published "*Satipatthāna Sutta Discourses: Talks from a course in Mahā-satipatthāna Sutta*" which are condensed transcripts of talks Goenka gave for the GV ten-day course that is focused on the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*.<sup>103</sup> It offers a body-centered interpretation of *satipatthana* practice.

### **The Origins of the Thai Forest Tradition**

Unlike Sri Lanka and Burma, Thailand was never taken over by a European colonial power. However, its transition from Siam as a feudal monarchy to Thailand as a modern nation-state during the 1800s and 1900s did see significant reform of the Buddhist monastic sangha along Western modernist lines. U.S. Thai Forest monk Thanissaro Bhikkhu recounts the history of this period in a 1998 article for Tricycle magazine entitled *The Home Culture of the Dharma*:

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<sup>99</sup> Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*.

<sup>100</sup> Goenka, Day Five Discourse, 23-27.

<sup>101</sup> Khin and Goenka, *Sayagi U Ba Khin Journal*.

<sup>102</sup> Khin and Goenka, 266-268, 271-276.

<sup>103</sup> Goenka, *Satipatthana Sutta Discourses*.

*The Story of a Thai Forest Tradition*.<sup>104</sup> Thanissaro describes four different monastic social contexts that were present during this period of modernization, namely “Customary Buddhism,” “Reform Buddhism,” “State Buddhism,” and a fourth context of monastics who took to the forest keeping ascetic precepts and practicing intensive meditation. He defines Customary Buddhism as,

...the mores and rites handed down over the centuries that, for the most part, taught monks to live a sedentary life in the village monastery, serving the local villagers as doctors or fortunetellers. Monastic discipline tended to be loose. [...] Moreover, monks and laypeople practiced forms of meditation that deviated from the path of tranquility and insight outlined in the Pali canon. Their practices, called *vichaa aakhom*, or incantation knowledge, involved initiations and invocations used for shamanistic purposes, such as protective charms and magical powers.<sup>105</sup>

This village shamanic context was the monastic social context that was common in Thailand before European colonial emissaries arrived on the scene. Reform Buddhism was initiated by Prince Mongkut (1804-1868) during the 27 years he was a monk before ascending the throne as king in 1851 at age 47. His monastic name was Vajirañāṇo. He initiated two cultural reforms. One was to integrate Western modern curriculum on geography and science into the monastic university curriculum. The other was to create the Dhammayuttika Nikaya, an order of monastics focused on modernizing the monastic sangha in Siam. According to Thanissaro,

In its early years, the Dhammayut movement was devoted to studying the Pali canon, with emphasis on the Vinaya; following the classic dhutanga practices; developing a rationalist interpretation of the dharma; and reviving meditation techniques taught in the Pali canon, such as recollection of the Buddha and mindfulness of the body.<sup>106</sup>

The Vinaya is the monastic rule established by the Buddha. The *dhutanga* practices are optional stricter renunciant rules aimed at deepening meditation practice and supporting spiritual

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<sup>104</sup> Thanissaro, “The Home Culture of the Dharma: The Story of a Thai Forest Tradition,” *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*, 1998, <https://tricycle.org/magazine/home-culture-dharma/>.

<sup>105</sup> Thanissaro.

<sup>106</sup> Thanissaro.

awakening.<sup>107</sup> Ajhan Sao (1861-1942) was a Dhammayut monk in northeastern Thailand who differed from the standard Dhammayut principles. Instead of engaging in in-depth scholarly study of the Pali Canon he focused on studying a smaller number of discourses dealing with meditation. Instead of staying at a monastery most of the time he wandered in the forest. He also engaged in more intensive meditation practice as compared the average Dhammayut monk.

According to Thanissaro Bhikkhu, even though Ajhan Sao felt like he was on the right spiritual track he had not yet reached one of the four fruits of attainment, namely stream entry, once returner, non-returner or *arahat*. In other words, he had not had an experience of *nibbana* that weakens or destroys some or all of the ten fetters. His student Ajhan Mun (1870-1949) trained with Ajhan Sao for a few years in northeast Thailand to imbibe his style of practice. He then embarked on an epic quest to achieve spiritual attainment in the forests of Thailand, Burma, and Laos that lasted almost 20 years. According to Thanissaro, Ajhan Mun was successful in his quest. Thanissaro states, “when Ajaan Mun had reached the point where he could guarantee that the path to the noble attainments was still open, he returned to the Northeast to inform Ajaan Sao and then to continue wandering.”<sup>108</sup> The relationship between Ajhan Sao and Ajhan Mun demonstrates the inseparability of close monastic interpersonal relationship and deep intra-personal relationship to the Unconditioned, i.e., *nibbana*. It also provides an example of how the deepest elements of the Buddhist tradition can be revived.

After returning to Ajhan Sao in northeast Thailand, Ajhan Mun began attracting a significant number of monastic students. This resulted in the establishment of the *Kammattthana* tradition (meditation tradition) of forest monastics. Thanissaro states,

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<sup>107</sup> Wikipedia, s.v., “Dhutanga,” last modified June 17, 2022, 13:41, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Dhutanga&oldid=1093572968>.

<sup>108</sup> Thanissaro, “The Home Culture of the Dharma: The Story of a Thai Forest Tradition.”

The Kammatthana tradition was founded by Ajaan Mun Bhuridatto (Ajaan is Thai for “teacher”) in the early decades of this century. Ajaan Mun’s mode of practice was solitary and strict. He followed the Vinaya (monastic discipline) faithfully and also observed many of what are known as the thirteen classic dhutanga (ascetic) practices, such as living off almsfood, wearing robes made of cast-off rags, dwelling in the forest, and eating only one meal a day. Searching out secluded places in the wilds of Thailand and Laos, he avoided the responsibilities of settled monastic life and spent long hours of the day and night in meditation. In spite of his reclusive nature, he attracted a large following of students willing to put up with the hardships of forest life in order to study with him.<sup>109</sup>

Thanissaro states that when Siam transitioned from a loose feudal network to a centralized modern nation-state under King Mongkut’s successor Rama V, the monastic social context of State Buddhism arose from Reform Buddhism. The State Buddhism ecclesiastical authorities tried to bring Ajhan Mun and the Kammatthana tradition in line with State Buddhism policies. The ecclesiastical authorities conflated the Kammathhana monks wandering in the forest to engage in intensive meditation practice with Customary Buddhism monks who wandered from village to village and city to city more as a vacation or change of scene. According to Thanissaro,

In an effort to present a united front in the face of imperialist threats from Britain and France, Rama V (1868-1910) wanted to move the country from a loose feudal system to a centralized nation-state. As part of his program, he and his brothers—one of whom was ordained as a monk—enacted religious reforms to prevent the encroachment of Christian missionaries. Having received their education from British tutors, they created a new monastic curriculum that subjected the dharma and Vinaya to Victorian notions of reason and utility. Their new version of the Vinaya, for instance, was a compromise between Customary and Reform Buddhism, designed to counter Christian attacks that monks were unreliable and lazy. Monks were instructed to give up their wanderings, settle in established monasteries, and accept the new state curriculum. Because the Dhammayut monks were the best educated in Thailand at the time—and had the closest connections to the royal family—they were enlisted to do advance work for the government in outlying regions.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Thanissaro.

<sup>110</sup> Thanissaro.

One Dhammayut official was sent to the city of Chiang Mai in northeast Thailand to implement the State Buddhism reforms. He tried to make Ajhan Mun the abbot of a monastery in Chiang Mai. Ajhan Mun rejected the offer and left northeast Thailand to continue his style of forest practice in the forests of the greater surrounding region beyond the reach of state ecclesiastical authority. He returned to northeast Thailand towards the end of his life when the Kammatthana tradition became more widely accepted and appreciated by Thai culture in general and by state ecclesiastical authorities in particular.

One of Ajhan Mun's students was Ajhan Cha (1918-1992) who attracted a large number of foreign monastics from the U.S., Europe, and Australia to his forest monastery, Wat Pah Pong, in northeast Thailand. At one point he established another forest monastery for foreigners called Wat Pah Nanachat near Wat Pah Pong. He placed U.S. monk Ajhan Sumedho, his senior foreign student, in charge. Ajhan Cha later sent Ajhan Sumedho to England where he founded Cittaviveka Monastery (aka Chithurst Monastery) south of London and then later Amaravati Monastery in a northern suburb of London. Another student of Ajhan Mun was Ajhan Lee Dhammadaro (1907-1961). Thanissaro Bhikkhu trained in Thailand with Ajhan Fuong (1915-1986), a student of Ajhan Lee. Thanissaro went on to found Wat Metta (Metta Forest Monastery) in the U.S. in the town of Valley Center, California, outside of San Diego.

Ajhan Sumedho has published a number of books on meditation practice based on teachings from the Pali Canon and the oral tradition of the Ajhan Cha lineage.<sup>111</sup> One of his most notable books is a commentary on the Discourse on Rolling Forth the Wheel of Dhamma (SN

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<sup>111</sup> Ajahn Sumedho, *The Way It Is*, (Taiwan: Amaravati Publications, 1991); Bhikkhu Sumedho, *Cittaviveka: Teaching from the Silent Mind- With Other Narratives of the Monastic Life* (Hemel Hempstead, England: Amaravati Publications, 1992); Ajhan Sumedho, *Now Is The Knowing* (Hertfordshire, England: Amaravati Publications, 1996).

56:11, *Dhammacakkapavātana Sutta*) entitled *The Four Noble Truths*.<sup>112</sup> In that book, Sumedho interprets the Four Noble Truths using the teachings on the links of dependent origination.

Thanissaro, while staying true to the forest monastery lifestyle of renunciation and intensive meditation, also engaged in extensive scholarship. He has published translations and commentaries on early texts from the Pali Canon as well as meditation teachings from Ajhan Lee and Ajhan Fuong that includes his own teachings on meditation.<sup>113</sup> Based on the teachings from his lineage and his research into the Pali Canon, Thanissaro has recovered what he believes to be early Buddhist teachings on meditation that differ significantly from the Buddhaghosa *Visuddhimagga* understanding. The latter pervades modern Theravada scholasticism in general and the Mahasi *vipassana* and GV lineages in particular. These differences will be discussed below in the concluding section of this literature review.

Ajhan Sujato, an Australian monk from the Ajhan Cha tradition, has done groundbreaking research into the *satipatthana* teachings in the Pali Canon in his book *A History of Mindfulness, How Insight Worsted Tranquility in the Satipatthana Sutta*.<sup>114</sup> It was first published in 2005 and then revised in 2012. By comparing the Theravada Pali Canon with extant ancient canons from India that are in Sanskrit or translated from Sanskrit into Chinese, he has concluded that the *Samyutta Nikaya* from the Pali Canon and the *Samyukta Agama* from the Saravastivada Sanskrit Canon have a significant amount in common in terms of content and structure. He posits that this commonality of content and structure from these two ancient Indian

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<sup>112</sup> Ajhan Sumedho, *The Four Noble Truths* (Hertfordshire, England: Amaravati, 1992).

<sup>113</sup> Ajhan Lee Dhammadharo, *Keeping the Breath in Mind and Lessons in Samadhi*, trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu, (Valley Center CA: Metta Forest Monastery, 2017); Ajhan Lee Dhammadharo, *Frames of Reference*, trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Valley Center CA: Metta Forest Monastery, 2011); Bhikkhu Thanissaro, *Wings to Awakening: An Anthology from the Pali Canon*, 2013, <https://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/wings/index.html>; Dhammadharo, *Keeping the Breath in Mind and Lessons in Samadhi*.

<sup>114</sup> Sujato, *A History of Mindfulness*.

canons points to a common ancestral source.<sup>115</sup> He argues therefore that, for the most part, the *Samyutta Nikaya* and *Samyukta Agama* contain the earliest strata of discourses in the extant ancient canons from India. To date Sujato’s findings have held, i.e., they have not been successfully refuted. The table below (Figure Two) adapted from his book shows the ancient canons he compared and the schools they come from.

<b>Theravāda Nikāyas</b>	<b>Sarvāstivāda Āgamas</b>	<b>Other Āgamas (in Chinese)</b>
Dīgha (Pali)	Dīrgha (Sanskrit)	T1 Dīrgha (Dharmaguptaka, trans. Buddhayaśas)
Majjhima (Pali)	T26 Madhyama (Chinese trans. Gotama Saṅghadeva)	
Saṃyutta (Pali)	T99 Saṃyukta (Chinese trans. Guṇabhadra)	Two ‘other’ Saṃyuktas (T100, T101, unknown schools)
Aṅguttara (Pali)		T125 Ekottara (Mahāsaṅghika?, trans. Gotama Saṅghadeva)

Figure 2: Comparison of the Nikayas and Agamas (Adapted from Ajhan Sujato’s book *History of Mindfulness...*)<sup>116</sup>

### The Origins of the Order of Interbeing

Thich Nhat Hanh (1926-2022) founded the Order of Interbeing (OI) for both lay and monastic members in February of 1966 in Vietnam.<sup>117</sup> The OI focused on Engaged Buddhism that sought to bring about an end to the war through nonviolent means and to reform Vietnamese society through modernizing Buddhism as part of the greater Buddhist reform movement in Vietnam. A major influence on Thich Nhat Hanh was the Chinese reformer monk Taixu (1890-1947). When the Qing Dynasty (1899-1912) in China was replaced by the Republic of China (1912-1949), the feudal system that had traditionally supported Buddhist monasticism in China disappeared. According to religious studies scholar Holmes Welch (1921-1981), “Confucians,

<sup>115</sup> Sujato, 34.

<sup>116</sup> Sujato, 21.

<sup>117</sup> John Chapman, “The 2005 Pilgrimage and Return to Vietnam of 297 Exiled Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh,” in *Modernity and Re-Enchantment Religion in Post-Revolutionary Vietnam*, ed. Phillip Taylor (Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2007), 302.

Christians, modernizers, predatory officials, and bandits” all wanted to take over the monasteries in China and repurpose them for more modern secular uses and or material gain.<sup>118</sup> This sparked a Buddhist revival in China that tried to defend Buddhist monasticism through publishing, the integration of modern education into monasteries, the creation of national associations, the creation of lay organizations, and the creation of an international network of Buddhist organizations.

Within the revival of Chinese Buddhism there was a spectrum of goals. On one end was the goal of restoring classical Chinese Buddhism. On the other end was the goal of reforming Chinese Buddhism into a modernized tradition. The restoration end of the spectrum sought to revive traditional monasticism by focusing on strict monastic rule, renunciation, and intensive meditation practice to realize nirvana at elite Chan monasteries and or hermitages. The modern reforms were seen by the restorationists as necessary evils to preserve monastic infrastructure so that traditional practice could continue. Chan master Hsu Yun (1840-1959) was emblematic of this restoration end of the spectrum of the revival agenda, and this end of the spectrum was what the majority of monastics in China supported.<sup>119</sup>

The reform end of the spectrum sought to modernize Buddhist monasticism through integrating Western university curriculum into monastic training, integrating Western scientific knowledge with Buddhist teachings, no longer performing what it saw as superstitious rituals like chanting for the dead, and focusing on the betterment of society via philanthropic projects. It did not seek to restore the tradition of intensive meditation practice to realize nirvana. Taixu represented this reformist end of the spectrum of the reform agenda. According to Welch, “the chief importance of T’ai-hsu [Taixu] lies in what he personified: one answer to the problem of

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<sup>118</sup> Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China* (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968), 23.

<sup>119</sup> Welch, 71.

modernization and one extreme in the Chinese Buddhist response to the West.”<sup>120</sup> Welch critiques Taixu by stating “he does not seem to have pondered deeply enough on whether, if Chinese Buddhism was reformed in the manner he proposed, if it would still be Buddhist or even Chinese.”<sup>121</sup> In describing how the restoration style monks viewed Taixu, Welch states that Taixu,

seemed to them to talk about Buddhism more than he practiced it. The monks they most respected—Hsu-yun, Yin-kuang, Ti-hsien, Hung-i, Lai-kuo, T’an-hsu—were persons from whom practice was of the essence, who remained aloof from the world rather than seeking for status in it, who wanted to restore Buddhism to what it had been rather than to make it into something new. They feared that, if it were made into something as new as T’ai-hsu seemed to be proposing, it would no longer be Buddhism.”<sup>122</sup>

One could say that the Chinese practice monks like Hsu Yun were more like Ajhan Mun and the Kammatthana forest monks in Thailand. One could say monks like Taixu were more like the Dhammayut Reform Buddhism and State Buddhism monks in Thailand. When the communists took power in China in 1949 and established the People’s Republic of China, they violently suppressed Buddhism based on their Marxist antifeudal and scientific materialist worldview that associated monasticism with feudalism and the traditional Buddhist worldview with superstition. One could say that the Marxist cultural revolution led by Mao was based in a worldview of Marxist naturalism that carried over some principles from the humanistic naturalism of Confucianism and scholastic Daoism..

Chiang Kai-shek and the Republic of China government and army fled to Taiwan and established the Republic of China there. Many Buddhist monastics fled to Taiwan from communist oppression. Taixu’s reform Buddhism continued as Humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan through the Buddhist organizations of Fo Guang Shan, Tzu Chi, and Dharma Drum Mountain

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<sup>120</sup> Welch, 51.

<sup>121</sup> Welch, 51.

<sup>122</sup> Welch, 71.

which focused on education, philanthropic work, and a more humanistic interpretation of Chan Buddhism respectively. Thich Nhat Hanh continued Taixu's reform Buddhism through what he called "Engaged Buddhism," first in Vietnam, and then later in Western Europe and the U.S.

According to religious studies scholar Elise Ann DeVido (brackets in quote are DeVido's),

From the 1920s, Vietnamese Buddhist reformers revitalized their religion, inspired in part by the Chinese monk Taixu's (1890–1947) blueprint to modernize and systematize sangha education and temple administration, and by his idea of *renjian fojiao* [Nhân Gian Phật Giáo], "Buddhism for this world", emphasizing the centrality of education, modern publishing, social work, and Buddhist lay groups to ensure Buddhism's future in the modern world.<sup>123</sup>

Before discussing Thich Nhat Hanh's work in the Buddhist reform movement in Vietnam in the 1960s, some background information on him will be provided. He was born in 1926 in Hue, the ancient capitol in central Vietnam. His father was an official in the French colonial administration under the French Third Republic in France. His mother was a homemaker. In approximately 1942 at age 16 he ordained as a novice monk in the Lam Te Thiền (Chinese Lin Chi Chan) lineage in the Liễu Quán Thiền Chan sub-lineage at Từ Hiếu Monastery in Huế under Thích Chân Thật.<sup>124</sup> After three years as a novice at Từ Hiếu he fully ordained as a monk and took classes at the Báo Quốc Buddhist Institute in Huế. However, as part of the Buddhist reform movement he wanted a modern Western education and so he left Báo Quốc to attend Saigon University.<sup>125</sup> He fully ordained in 1951 at approximately 25 years of age.

In the 1960s Buddhists in South Vietnam led a populist Buddhist social movement that sought to bring an end to the war against the French and later the U.S., end religious persecution of Buddhists by the South Vietnamese Catholic regime, and reunify the country. Thich Nhat

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<sup>123</sup> Elise Anne DeVido, "'Buddhism for This World': The Buddhist Revival in Vietnam, 1920 to 1951, and Its Legacy," in *Modernity and Re-Enchantment: Religion in Post-Revolutionary Vietnam*, ed. Phillip Taylor (Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2007), 252. First brackets in quote are DeVido's, the second brackets are mine.

<sup>124</sup> Chapman, "The 2005 Pilgrimage and Return to Vietnam," 297.

<sup>125</sup> Chapman, 300.

Hanh was a prominent voice in the movement calling for an end to the war and for the modernization of Buddhism. According to Order of Interbeing member John Chapman in describing the movement,

A Vietnamese Buddhist Reunification Congress was held at the Xá Lợi Temple in Saigon from 21 December 1963, until 3 January 1964. This resulted in the creation of the Unified Buddhist Sangha of Vietnam (Giáo-hội Phật-giáo Thống-nhất Việt-Nam or UBCV) on 13 January 1964. Shortly afterwards, Thích Nhất Hạnh submitted a Three-Point Proposal to its Executive Council, requesting that, firstly, the UBCV should publicly call for the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam; secondly, that it should help to build an institute for the study and practice of Buddhism to train future leaders; and thirdly, that a centre should be created for training social workers who could help bring about non-violent social change based on the Buddha's teachings. The initial response of the Executive Council was to offer support only for the Institute of Higher Buddhist Studies (Học Viện Phật Giáo Việt Nam), which was set up on 13 March 1964. Subsequently, the School of Youth for Social Service (SYSS) was inaugurated in September 1965.

[....]

During this period, Thích Nhất Hạnh and others also established a publishing house, Lá Bối Press, which grew to be quite large and influential. Besides this, he edited the weekly journal *Hải Triều Âm* (Sound of the Rising Tide), the official publication of the UBCV.<sup>126</sup>

The name of the journal, *Hải Triều Âm* (Sound of the Rising Tide), appears to be based on Taixu's journal *Hai-ch'ao yin* (The Voice of the Sea Tide).<sup>127</sup> In 1964 when the U.S. was about to send troops to Vietnam Thích Nhất Hạnh wrote an article that called for the governments of the North and South to come to terms and bring an end to the war.<sup>128</sup> In the article he referred to the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) as "brothers." This resulted in the South Vietnamese government shutting down the journal.

As mentioned above, Thích Nhất Hạnh created the OI in 1966. He went to the U.S. in 1966 to call for an end to the war which resulted in him being exiled from both the North and South Vietnamese governments. He and his senior student Sister Chan Khong ran the SYSS activities

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<sup>126</sup> Chapman, 301-302.

<sup>127</sup> Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China*, 54.

<sup>128</sup> Chapman, "The 2005 Pilgrimage and Return to Vietnam," 302.

in Vietnam from France. He represented Vietnamese Buddhists in the Paris peace talks. After the war was over, he and Sister Chan Khong moved to the countryside in France and eventually established Plum Village Monastery in the Dordogne region of southwest France east of Bordeaux. He was a prolific writer publishing many books on mindfulness practice that sold widely in Europe and the U.S.

Thich Nhat Hanh's Buddhist meditation teachings combined Mahayana teachings on the eight consciousnesses and on emptiness with Theravada teachings on *satipatthana*. His form of "Engaged Buddhism" is in keeping with Taixu's "Buddhism for this world" in that it focuses on greater welfare and happiness in the present life and not on favorable rebirth or liberation from rebirth. He was mostly an autodidact in that he tended to rely on his own study and practice of Buddhism and did not credit anyone else as his primary meditation teacher.

Another of his senior students, Sister Chan Duc (aka Annabel Laity), is a British nun who worked closely with Thich Nhat Hanh in translating the *Anapanasati Sutta* and *Satipatthana Sutta* into English based on a comparative study of Chinese, Pali, and Sanskrit sources.<sup>129</sup> A significant number of Vietnamese refugees that relocated to Europe and the U.S. ordained as monastics with Thich Nhat Hanh. So did many citizens from the U.S., Europe, and Australia. In addition, many lay practitioners interested in combining mindfulness practice with social work, psychotherapy, and or activism have joined the OI. Thich Nhat Hanh's senior monastics continue to manage the 11 monasteries he established

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<sup>129</sup> Hanh, *Breathe! You Are Alive*.

in Europe, the U.S., and Asia. His lay OI students run local congregations all over the world.<sup>130</sup>

## **A Comparison of Thai Forest, Goenka Vipassana, Western Vipassana Movement, and Order of Interbeing Interpretations of Satipatthana Teachings from the Pali Canon**

### **Ajhan Sujato and Thanissaro Bhikkhu's Thai Forest Interpretations**

As mentioned above, Sujato's main research finding presented in his *A History of Mindfulness* is that the *Samyutta Nikaya* contains, for the most part, the earliest strata of discourses in the Pali Canon. This finding has significant implications for the contemporary understanding of *satipatthana* teachings in the Pali Canon. It reverses a widely held notion among researchers into *satipatthana* practice which holds that the *Satipatthana Sutta* MN:10 in the *Majjhima Nikaya* is an earlier longer text and that the many shorter discourses on *satipatthana* in the *Samyutta Nikaya* are less important texts that function more as commentaries to the *Satipatthana Sutta*. According to Sujato,

Apart from “the” *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the other discourses on *satipaṭṭhāna*, since they are so much shorter, are usually ignored under the assumption that they add little new. Even the best of the scholars who have studied *satipaṭṭhāna* from a historical perspective, such as Warder, Gethin, and Anālayo, have treated the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as primary and the shorter discourses as supplements.

So now I would like to reverse that procedure. Our first step must be to forget all we've learnt about *satipaṭṭhāna*, and to start again from the bottom up. A basic principle of the historical method is that simpler teachings tend to be earlier and hence are likely to be more authentic—we must start with the bricks before we can build a house. It is the shorter, more basic, passages that are the most fundamental presentation of *satipaṭṭhāna*. The longer texts are an elaboration. We do not assume that shorter is always earlier, but we take this as a guiding principle whose implications we can follow through.<sup>131</sup>

<sup>130</sup> “Plum Village Practice Centers,” Plum Village, accessed August 3, 2022, <https://plumvillage.org/community/monastic-practice-centres/>; “Global Sangha Directory,” *The Mindfulness Bell*, accessed August 3, 2022, <https://www.parallax.org/mindfulnessbell/sangha-directory/>.

<sup>131</sup> Sujato, *A History of Mindfulness*, 3.

Sujato argues that the discourses on *satipatthana* (four establishments of mindfulness) and *anapanasati* (16 exercises of mindfulness of breathing) in the *Samyutta Nikaya* must be understood within the interconnected system of discourses that make up the *Samyutta Nikaya*. He posits that the Discourse on Rolling Forth the Wheel of Dhamma (SN 56:11, *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*) in which the Buddha gives an overview of the Four Noble Truths is indeed—as the discourse itself and Buddhist tradition holds—the first formal sermon the Buddha gave after he realized *nibbana*.<sup>132</sup> He considers the discourses that make up the *Samyutta Nikaya* to be the Buddha’s exposition on the Four Noble Truths that he gave over his decades of his teaching career.<sup>133</sup>

If Sujato’s research finding is correct, it is reasonable to assume that even though discourses were probably added to the *Samyutta Nikaya* after the Buddha’s passing, a large number of the discourses within it *are* the oral teachings given by the Buddha and members of his fourfold community of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. It would also therefore be reasonable to assume that the network of interconnected discourses on the Four Noble Truths in the *Samyutta Nikaya* form the core body of oral teachings that were maintained by early Buddhist monastics through the practice of collective chanting from the time of the Buddha (approx. 6<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE) to the time of Ashoka (304-232 BCE). This core body of oral teachings on the Four Noble Truths (the Buddha’s *Dhamma*) was inexorably connected to the core body of oral teachings that made up the monastic rule (*Vinaya*).

The collections of discourses that make up the *Samyutta Nikaya* are organized around themes, hence the title “Connected Discourses.” Based on Bhikkhu Bodhi’s introduction to his 2000 English translation, the *Samyutta Nikaya* is composed of five books (*Vaggas*) which

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<sup>132</sup> Sujato, 23-26.

<sup>133</sup> Sujato, 48.

contain 56 chapters (*samyuttas*) which contain 111 subchapters (*vaggas*) which contain 2,904 discourses (*suttas*).<sup>134</sup> Sujato and Bodhi suspect that the order of the five books in the originally Sanskrit *Samyukta Agama* may be older than the order in the Pali *Samyutta Nikaya* since the former more closely adheres to the order of the Four Noble Truths.<sup>135</sup> Based on that presumed older sequencing, the five books in the *Samyutta Nikaya* are the *Kandhavagga* (Book of the [Five] Aggregates), the *Salayatanavagga* (Book of the Six Sense Bases), the *Nidanavagga* (Book of the Links of Dependent Origination), the *Mahavagga* (Great Book), and the *Sagathavagga* (Book with Verses). The *Khandavagga* and the *Salayatanavagga* are related to the First Noble Truth in that they focus on teaching that suffering is made up of identification with and attachment to the five aggregates and the six sense bases. The *Nidanavagga* is related to the Second and Third Noble Truths in that it focuses on the links of dependent origination to discuss the role of ignorance, craving, and aversion as the root cause of suffering as rebirth and the definition of what the cessation of suffering means as the cessation of rebirth. The *Mahavagga* deals with the Fourth Noble Truth in that it deals with the interconnected system of contemplative practices that make up the Eightfold Path. The discourses in the *Sagathavagga* are not connected to each other by a common theme, but rather by genre, namely short poetic verses (*gathas*) instead of the prose style of the discourses in the other four *Vaggas*.

When viewed as an interconnected system of discourses on the Four Noble Truths, it becomes clear in the *Samyutta Nikaya* that the teachings on the links of dependent origination in the *nidanasmayutta* of the *Nidanavagga* represents the core theory behind the Buddha's teachings on the Four Noble Truths. Taken together, the discourses in the *nidanasmayutta* teach

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<sup>134</sup> Bodhi, trans., *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya*, 2 Vols (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 22-25.

<sup>135</sup> Sujato, *A History of Mindfulness*, 48.

that suffering has two root causes, namely ignorance and craving. In the “Analysis Discourse” (SN 12:2, *Vibhaṅgasutta*) in the *nīdanasamyutta* the Buddha provides brief definitions of each of the 12 links of dependent origination. He defines ignorance as “not knowing suffering, not knowing the origin of suffering, not knowing the cessation of suffering, and not knowing the way leading to the cessation of suffering.”<sup>136</sup> In the “Suffering Discourse” (SN 22:13, *Dukkhasutta*) of the *khandasamyutta* in the *Khandavagga* he states that the five aggregates of body, sensation/feeling, perception, mental formation, and the six consciousnesses—seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and mental activity—are suffering.<sup>137</sup> In other words consciousness identifying with and attaching to the five aggregates (*pañcupādānakkhandhā*) is suffering in the form of ignorance.

The first four links of the 12 links are ignorance (*avijjā*), volition (*sankhara*), consciousness (*vinnaṇa*), and name-and-form (*nama-rūpa* i.e., mind and body). These links can be seen to describe how a person’s consciousness takes up a new body and mind from a previous birth, or how a person’s consciousness continues to identify with and attach to a body and mind in one’s present lifetime. In the “Second Intention Discourse” (SN 12:39, *Dutiyacetanāsutta*) of the *nīdanasamyutta* in the *Nīdanavagga* the Buddha teaches,

Bhikkhus, what one intends, and what one plans, and whatever one has a tendency towards: this becomes a basis for the maintenance of consciousness. When there is a basis, there is a support for the establishing of consciousness. When consciousness is established and has come to growth, there is a descent of name-and-form.<sup>138</sup>

Because one has not realized *nibbana* there is ignorance of the Four Noble Truths, i.e., *nibbana* has not been realized, and so one still identifies with and buys into volition. The four aggregates of sensation/feeling, perception, mental formation, and the six consciousnesses make up name

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<sup>136</sup> Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, 535.

<sup>137</sup> Bodhi, 868-869.

<sup>138</sup> Bodhi, 576-577.

(*nama*). The aggregate of form (*rupa*), i.e., the body (*kaya*), is made up of the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water. Because of ignorance one buys into volition which results in consciousness getting established on name-and-form. This results in the six sense bases manifesting which results in contact between the sense bases and sense objects.

In the “Suffering Discourse” (SN 12:43, *Dhukkhasutta* ) of the *nidanasamyutta* in the *Nidanavagga* the Buddha deals with links five through eight of the 12 links, namely the sense bases (*salayatana*), contact (*phassa*), sensation/feeling (*vedana*), and craving (*tanha*).

And what, bhikkhus, is the origin of suffering. In dependence on the eye and forms, eye consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition, feeling [comes to be]; with feeling as condition, craving. This is the origin of suffering.<sup>139</sup>

Here the cause of suffering is craving which arises from sensations which arises from sensory contact. If one acts on the craving by grasping (*upadana*), then there is becoming (*bhava*).

Within a single lifetime one is constantly in a process of experiencing links six through ten of the 12 links. In more karmically neutral terms those links are contact (*phassa*), sensation/feeling (*vedana*), intention/emotion (*sankhara*), action (*kamma*), and the embodied result or becoming (*bhava*) of that intentional action. The goal of Buddhist practice is first to abandon acting on unwholesome (*akusala*) intention/emotion which leads to unwholesome becoming. Instead, one tries to act on wholesome (*kusala*) intention/emotion which leads to wholesome becoming.

Based on the relatively wholesome base established by wholesome becoming, one then attempts to abandon acting on intention/emotion altogether to become liberated from becoming, i.e., rebirth. This path of practice is seen as a multi-lifetime project. Until one has realized *nibbana*, one goes from the death of the current body and mind to the birth of the next body and mind,

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<sup>139</sup> Bodhi, 580-581.

which in turn results in old age and death. Birth (*jati*) and old age and death (*jara-marana*) are the final two of the 12 links.

The Buddha's teachings on *satipatthana* in the *satipatthanasamyutta* of the *Mahavagga* represent the core contemplative structure for sitting meditation. They teach mindfulness of: the body (*kaya*), sensation/feeling (*vedana*), the heart-mind (*citta*), and *dhamma*.<sup>140</sup> The 16 exercises of *anapanasati* in the *anapanasamyutta* of the *Mahavagga* represent the progression and content one goes through in sitting meditation practice using the *satipatthana* structure.<sup>141</sup> The goal of *anapanasati satipatthana* practice is to uproot the deeply rooted habit patterns (*sankharas*) of ignorance, craving, and aversion that make up the ten fetters (*samyojana*).<sup>142</sup> In other words one is trying to become liberated from craving and aversion which drives rebirth as well as identification and attachment to the body and mind as self which is the root cause of craving and aversion.

The first tetrad of *anapanasati* practice—i.e., the first set of four exercises—is focused on mindfulness of breathing and the whole physical body, then on calming the bodily fabrications (*kaya sankhara*) of the physical body. I see this as calming the body in terms of physical tension. This results in the body and mind being present, and in the five hindrances of 1) lust, 2) hatred, 3) sloth and torpor, 4) restlessness and agitation, and 5) doubt being absent. The second tetrad is focused on cultivating the four *jhanas*. One experiences the sensations/feelings of rapture and

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<sup>140</sup> Bodhi, SN 47:24 “Simple Version,” 1651-1652.

<sup>141</sup> Bodhi, SN 54:1 “One Thing,” 1765-1766.

<sup>142</sup> “AN 10:13 Samyojana Sutta | Fetters,” accessed September 15, 2020, [https://www.dhammadata.org/suttas/AN/AN10\\_13.html](https://www.dhammadata.org/suttas/AN/AN10_13.html).

As a reminder, the ten fetters are as follows from AN 10:13.

“Mendicants, there are ten fetters. What ten? The five lower fetters and the five higher fetters. What are the five lower fetters? Identity view, doubt, misapprehension of precepts and observances, sensual desire, and ill will. These are the five lower fetters.

What are the five higher fetters? Desire for rebirth in the realm of luminous form, desire for rebirth in the formless realm, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance. These are the five higher fetters. These are the ten fetters.”

bliss in the whole body, and then, with the calming of mental fabrications (*citta sankhara*), equanimity in the whole body and mind. I see this as calming emotions experienced as sensation/feeling. Thus, the four *jhanas* in the *Samyutta Nikaya* are meditative states in which the practitioner is aware of his/her/their breathing and whole body and mind. This is a *significantly different understanding* of *jhana* than the one Buddhaghosa puts forward in the *Visuddhimagga* which informs Ledi Sayadaw's and Mahasi Sayadaw's understanding of *jhana*.<sup>143</sup>

The first two tetrads of *anapanasati* deal with the suffering rooted in craving and aversion. The practitioner cultivates progressively more wholesome and more subtle sensations/feelings to progressively let go of craving and aversion that arises from less wholesome and less subtle sensations/feelings. The third tetrad focuses on suffering rooted in ignorance because it is based on mindfulness of the heart-mind (*citta*) and liberating it from identifying and attaching to conditioned phenomena. But being mindful of the heart-mind is still based on being mindful of the breathing and of the whole physical body in the fourth *jhana*. In other words, awareness of the heart-mind in the third tetrad is not separate from awareness of the breath and the whole body. Awareness of the breath and the whole body serves as the contemplative platform to practice mindfulness of the heart-mind and its movements.

In "Spiritual Discourse" (SN 36:31, *Nirāmisasutta*) from the *vedanasamyutta* (sensation/feeling chapter) of the *Salayatanavagga* the Buddha describes the progression of meditation practice one goes through in his path of practice by discussing three levels of pleasurable *vedana*.<sup>144</sup> He teaches that these three levels of sensation give rise to three levels of rapture, bliss, and equanimity. "Carnal" pleasure is based on "sensual pleasure." This is the

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<sup>143</sup> As discussed above with Ledi's *Anapanadipani*, the *Visuddhimagga* view of *jhana* is that the practitioner is aware of a subtle mental image, the counterpoint sign, and is not aware of their body and normal mental activity. Thus, *jhana* practice and *vipassana* practice are seen as two separate practices.

<sup>144</sup> Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, 1283-1285.

pleasure a monastic gives up by keeping the monastic rule. “Spiritual” pleasure is based on the four *jhanas*. This is the more refined spiritual pleasure a monastic cultivates in meditation.

“More spiritual than spiritual” pleasure is based on realizing *nibbana* and uprooting the “taints,” i.e., the ten fetters (*samyoyana*). This is the culmination of practicing the Eightfold Path.

In the context of the 16 exercises the first four are about letting go of internal indulging in sensual craving and aversion to experience carnal pleasure and instead enjoying a modicum of contentment and peace. In exercises five through eight one cultivates four *jhanas* to experience spiritual pleasure that is more satisfying than carnal pleasure and spiritual equanimity that is deeper than a modicum of contentment. In exercises nine through 12 one cultivates a deep gladness and stability of the heart-mind free from mental movement. In exercises 13-16 one abides in the fourth *jhana* aware of the breath, the whole body, and the gladdened and stabilized heart-mind liberated from identifying with conditioned phenomena. In exercises 14-16 he/she/they then contemplates the impermanence (*anicca*) of the body and mind in order give rise to dispassion (*viraga*) towards the body and mind so that he/she/they can experience the more spiritual than spiritual pleasure of *nibbana*, i.e., cessation (*nirodha*). Experiencing *nibbana* results in the weakening or destruction of the ten fetters, i.e., relinquishment (*paṭinissagga*).

The experience of *nibbana* cannot be forced, it must happen organically. In the *anapanasamyutta* in the *Mahavagga* the Buddha teaches that “concentration by mindfulness of breathing” (*anapanasati samadhi*) is what he himself practiced before attaining *nibbana*, what he practices in retreat after having attained *nibbana*, and what monks and nuns should also practice before and after attaining *nibbana*.<sup>145</sup> In the “At Vesali Discourse” (SN 54:9) he describes *anapanasati samadhi* as a “dwelling” that monks and nuns should reside in during retreat. The

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<sup>145</sup> Bodhi, SN 54:8, “The Simile of the Lamp,” 1770, SN 54:11, “At Icchangala,” 1778-1779.

Buddha states, “Bhikkhus, this concentration by mindfulness of breathing when developed and cultivated, is peaceful and sublime, an ambrosial pleasant dwelling, and it disperses and quells right on the spot evil unwholesome states whenever they arise.”<sup>146</sup> Thus, *anapanasati samadhi* supports a monastic to be free from acting on carnal desires, provides a wholesome spiritual pleasure to dwell in, and provides the conditions for realizing the even greater spiritual pleasure of *nibbana*.

Based on his comparative study of the *Samyutta Nikaya* and the *Samyukta Agama* Sujato argues that *anapanasati* is the meditation practice the Buddha used to realize *nibbana* with and it is the main meditation practice he taught to monastics.<sup>147</sup> In Thanissaro Bhikkhu’s 2013 meditation manual *With Each and Every Breath: A Guide to Meditation* he also posits that *anapanasati* is what the Buddha practiced and taught. According to Thanissaro,

As the Canon states, the Buddha found the breath to be a restful meditation topic—both for body and mind—as well as an ideal topic for developing mindfulness, concentration, and discernment. In fact, it was the topic he himself used on the path to his awakening. That’s why he recommended it to more people and taught it in more detail than any other topic of meditation.<sup>148</sup>

In *With Each and Every Breath*, Thanissaro’s teachings on *anapanasati* are in accord with the teachings on *satipatthana* and *anapanasati* in the *Samyutta Nikaya*. In addition to discourses from the Pali Canon he also draws from the meditation teachings of Ajhan Lee that he learned through Ajhan Fuong. Thanissaro teaches that the practitioner should be aware of the breath and of the whole body, and that the practice of the four *jhanas* is based on awareness of breathing and the whole body.<sup>149</sup> He teaches an overall logic of practice in which the practitioner: develops a certain level of concentration; becomes aware of stress in the body and mind; works to release

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<sup>146</sup> Bodhi, SN 54:9 “At Vesali,” 1773-1774.

<sup>147</sup> Sujato, *A History of Mindfulness*, 248.

<sup>148</sup> Thanissaro, *With Each & Every Breath: A Guide to Meditation*, 5.

<sup>149</sup> Thanissaro, 86-90.

that stress by developing a deeper more refined level of concentration; and then repeats the process by becoming aware of a more subtle level of stress at that new level of concentration.<sup>150</sup>

When the practitioner has reached a place of deep peace and equanimity through fully developing the *jhanas*, then he/she/they focuses on how even that deep state of peace and equanimity is impermanent, a source of stress, and not worth identifying with. He describes this practice as cultivating “disenchantment” with the five aggregates in order to experience “insight” into “becoming” which results in “release” from consciousness feeding on the five aggregates.<sup>151</sup>

In an essay entitled *First Things First* from a collection of essays with the same title, Thanissaro distinguishes between a) early Buddhist meditation teachings that make use of the three perceptions (*sanna*) of impermanence, stress, and not-self in order to uproot the process of becoming, and b) later Buddhist teachings on the three characteristics of existence (*tilakhana*) that make use of the metaphysical truth claims that all phenomena are impermanent, suffering, and not self.<sup>152</sup> He argues that the former teaching on the three perceptions is grounded in the Four Noble Truths of suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path of practice leading to the cessation of suffering. He argues that the latter teaching on the three characteristics, (i.e., the three marks of existence,) is grounded in the three characteristics as metaphysical truth claims about the nature of reality which supersede the early Buddhist understanding of the Four Noble Truths. According to Thanissaro in discussing what the Buddha taught on the three perceptions versus what later scholastic teachings taught on the three characteristics, (i.e., the three marks of existence), he states,

His purpose in teaching these perceptions was for them to be applied to suffering and its cause as a way of fostering dispassion for the objects of clinging and craving, and for

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<sup>150</sup> Thanissaro, 95-96.

<sup>151</sup> Thanissaro, 96-100.

<sup>152</sup> Thanissaro Bhikkhu, *First Things First: Essays on the Buddhist Path* (Valley Center, CA, Metta Forest Monastery: Creative Commons, 2018), 20-28.

the acts of clinging and craving themselves. In this way, these perceptions were aids in carrying out the duties appropriate to the four noble truths: to comprehend suffering, to abandon its cause, to realize its cessation by developing the path. In other words, the four noble truths and their duties supplied the context for the three perceptions and determined their role in the practice.

However, over the centuries, as the three perceptions were renamed the three characteristics [i.e., three marks], they morphed in two other ways as well. First, they turned into a metaphysical teaching, as the characteristics of what things are: All are devoid of essence because they're impermanent and, since nothing has any essence, there is no self. Second, because these three characteristics were now metaphysical truths, they became the context within which the four noble truths were true.<sup>153</sup>

The practice of cultivating insight into the process of becoming using the three perceptions of impermanence, suffering, and not-self to attain release from the process of becoming is not the same thing as using the teachings on the three marks of existence to cultivate insight into the nature of reality. The former can be seen as Thanissaro's presentation of early Buddhist practice of the fourth establishment of mindfulness. The latter can be seen as the Mahasi *vipassana* presentation of what the practice of the fourth establishment of mindfulness means based on Theravada scholastic doctrine.

### **S.N. Goenka's Commentary on the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta***

In his commentary on the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta* Goenka translates *kaya* as "body," *vedana* as "sensation," *citta* as "mind," and *dhamma* as objects or "contents of mind."<sup>154</sup> Thus there are two possible objects of mindfulness, namely body sensation and mental activity. Within the greater context of the GV lineage *kaya* could be seen as the experience of sensations as the four elements, *vedana* could be seen as the experience of those same sensations as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. In GV the practitioner first attains access concentration through mindfulness of breathing at the nose and then switches to practicing awareness of body sensation

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<sup>153</sup> Thanissaro, 21.

<sup>154</sup> Goenka, *Satipatthana Sutta Discourses*, 59-61.

(*vedananupassana*) through the bodyscan practice.<sup>155</sup> Goenka teaches that sensation should always be the main focus of attention. He argues that if there is mental activity, i.e., contact between the mind and an object of mind, one should notice how that contact gives rise to a sensation in the body and then to pay attention to the sensation, not to the object of mind. This is because sensation is where craving and aversion arises and where they can be abandoned.

According to Goenka,

Then, as the Buddha elsewhere announced from his own experience, another reality: *vedanā-samosaraṇā sabbe dhammā*—“Everything that arises in the mind starts flowing with a sensation on the body.” *Samosaraṇā* means “gets collected together and flows.” *Vedanā* therefore becomes so important. To explore the *kāya* you have to feel sensations. Similarly in the exploration of *citta* and *dhamma*, everything that arises in the mind manifests as sensation.<sup>156</sup>

Thus, Goenka’s interpretation of *satipatthana* practice is a body-centered, or sensation-centered interpretation that is in accord with GV practice. In terms of contemplation of the *dhamma* to attain *nibbana* as the fourth establishment of mindfulness, GV focuses on the experience of impermanence (*anicca*) at the level of body sensation. The practitioner starts with awareness of gross sensations in the body. At the advanced stage of *bangha* the body is experienced as tiny particles (*kalapas*) arising and passing rapidly as wavelets of energy. According to Goenka, the practitioner must feel “the arising and passing away of *vedanā*, because impermanence has to be experienced at the level of *vedanā*.”<sup>157</sup> According to Goenka, this awareness of impermanence at the level of very subtle body sensation naturally gives rise to awareness that the body is not self and that it is a source suffering if attached to. Thus, awareness of body sensation also serves to disrupt the ignorance of identifying with and attaching to the body and mind as self.

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<sup>155</sup> It should be noted that access concentration here means the practitioner can maintain awareness of the sensation of the breath on the upper lip and or tip of the nose without being distracted. It does not mean that a counterpoint sign has arisen and that that is now the focus of attention.

<sup>156</sup> Goenka, *Satipatthana Sutta Discourses*, 65-66.

<sup>157</sup> Goenka, 67.

Since GV operates under the Buddhaghosa understanding of *jhana*, GV presents itself as a path of dry insight. However, the actual GV practice of awareness of the whole body is similar to Thanissaro's presentation of *jhana* in which one is aware of one's whole body. There are three main differences between GV and early Buddhist teachings on *anapanasati samadhi*. First, the early Buddhist *jhana* combines awareness of breathing and awareness of the whole body whereas in GV the two are separated. Second the early Buddhist *jhanas* deal with a progression of sensation/feeling experienced as rapture, bliss, equanimity, and then contemplation of the of impermanence, dispassion, cessation, and relinquishment. GV deals with a progression from gross to subtle body sensations and then a focus on impermanence. It does not discuss rapture, bliss, and equanimity as a progression of phenomenological experience that one goes through before contemplating impermanence. Third, GV does not discuss, at least in the published texts in English, the practices of the third tetrad on awareness of the heart-mind and liberating the heart-mind. Other than these three differences, GV is very similar to Thanissaro's depiction of early Buddhist meditation.

### **Joseph Goldstein's Commentary on the *Satipatthana Sutta***

In his commentary on the *Satipatthana Sutta* entitled *Mindfulness, A Practical Guide to Awakening*, Goldstein describes the practice of *vipassana* meditation as the "direct looking at the nature of the mind and body, and how suffering is created and how we can be free."<sup>158</sup> He expresses the importance and prominence of the *Satipatthana Sutta* by stating that the "practices of vipassana are all rooted in one important discourse of the Buddha: the Satipatthāna Sutta."<sup>159</sup> Thus, his understanding of the *Satipatthana Sutta* is in line with the school of interpretation that sees it as the main discourse on *satipatthana* teachings in the Pali Canon. It is not in line with

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<sup>158</sup> Goldstein, *Mindfulness*, preface, Kindle.

<sup>159</sup> Goldstein, preface, Kindle.

Sujato's interpretation which sees it as a later and less important discourse on *satipatthana* teachings. The *Satipatthana Sutta* contains lists of objects of meditation grouped around the four establishments of mindfulness. Unlike the teachings on *anapanasati* in the *Samyutta Nikaya* it does not deal with *jhana* practice as part of a progression through the four establishments. Unlike the *satipatthana* teachings in the *Samyutta Nikaya* the *Satipatthana Sutta* is not part of an interconnected network of teachings that features the links of dependent origination as the core theory behind the practice of *satipatthana* and *anapanasati*.

The *Satipatthana Sutta* offers a phenomenological map of possible experiences that may arise in a practitioner's awareness, as well as guided meditations on certain themes. The core theory behind the practice of mindfulness is the teachings on the three marks of existence.

Goldstein describes the trajectory of mindfulness in *satipatthana* practice as follows.

When the mind has settled a bit [i.e., gained access concentration], we can then begin paying attention to any other object that becomes more predominant. It might be sensations in the body, or sounds, or different thoughts and images arising in the mind. And as the mindfulness gains strength, we sometimes let go of the primary object altogether and practice a more choiceless awareness, simply being aware of whatever arises moment to moment. At this point, the awareness becomes more panoramic, we move from emphasis on the content of the particular experience to its more general characteristics—namely impermanence, unreliability [i.e., suffering], and selflessness of all that arises.<sup>160</sup>

Instead of teaching a progression through the four establishments via the 16 exercises, Goldstein teaches a practice of choiceless awareness that recognizes whatever phenomenon arises in the context of the four establishments. The links of dependent origination are not front and center. Goldstein translates *kaya* as “body,” *vedana* as “feeling,” *citta* as “mind,” and *dhamma* as “categories of experience.”<sup>161</sup> He sees these four establishments as “four ways of establishing

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<sup>160</sup> Goldstein, 37.

<sup>161</sup> Goldstein, 3.

mindfulness” in which each of the four establishments are types of phenomena that can arise in one’s awareness and that one can recognize and be mindful of.<sup>162</sup>

For mindfulness of the body the objects of mindfulness that the *Satipatthana Sutta* lists are breathing, postures, activities, body parts, the four elements, and visualization of the body as a decaying corpse. In describing what mindfulness of the body (*kaya*) means in terms of internal experience—as opposed mindfulness of other people’s bodies externally—Goldstein states, “it is the present-moment awareness of what arises in the body—it might be the sensations of the breath or of different sensations arising throughout the body, such as heat or cold, tightness or pressure.”<sup>163</sup> Goldstein’s description of mindfulness of the body is not incongruent with the Ledi Sayadaw’s teachings on mindfulness of the body as mindfulness of sensation as the four elements. Goldstein discusses mindfulness of the body as mindfulness of the four elements when discussing the section on the elements in the *Satipatthana Sutta*.<sup>164</sup> But he does not make mindfulness of the four elements the primary focus of *vipassana* practice the way Ledi did.

The sections on *vedana* and *citta* are very brief in the *Satipatthana Sutta*. The section on *vedana* teaches to distinguish between pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral *vedana* and between a more gross level and a more subtle level of *vedana*. Goldstein translates the two levels as “worldly” and “unworldly.”<sup>165</sup> He briefly distinguishes between worldly feelings that arise from sensory contact, unworldly feelings that arise from renunciation, and unworldly feelings that arise from insight. But he does not offer a substantial discussion of the *jhanas* and their role in mindfulness of feelings the way the *anapanasati* teachings in the *Samyutta Nikaya* do. He defines the term *vedana* by stating,

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<sup>162</sup> Goldstein, introduction, Kindle.

<sup>163</sup> Goldstein, 27.

<sup>164</sup> Goldstein, 69-75.

<sup>165</sup> Goldstein, 89.

*Vedanā* refers specifically to that quality of pleasantness, unpleasantness, or neutrality that arises with the contact of each moment's experience. These feelings arise with both physical and mental phenomena. There's a sensation in the body or we hear a sound, and we feel it as being pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Likewise with a thought or an emotion—we feel it as having one of these three feeling tones.<sup>166</sup>

In the quote from Goldstein in the previous paragraph he describes mindfulness of the body as mindfulness of sensations. In this quote on *vedana* he describes mindfulness of feelings as mindfulness of the pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral quality of sensations, thoughts, emotions, or sounds—and by extension sights, smells, and tastes. Thus, Goldstein teaches that a feeling can be experienced as a sensation in the body, a sense contact, an emotion, or a thought. Later on in the *vedana* section of his book he states, “once, during a two-month self-retreat, I was going through a very difficult time, with many uncomfortable sensations in the body and lots of very unpleasant mind states—feelings of despair, hopelessness, and anguish.”<sup>167</sup> Here he distinguishes between feelings as uncomfortable sensations and feelings as unpleasant mind states that are emotions. Thus, his description of what *vedana* is as the second establishment and how it differs from the body as the first establishment is vague and somewhat ambiguous.

As stated above, GV translates *vedana* as sensation and teaches that a sensation can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Using the teachings on the links of dependent origination GV teaches that mental formations such as craving and aversion arise from sensations. Thus, GV categorizes emotions as mental formations (*sankharas*) and not as sensations. Goldstein makes due mention of the links of dependent origination in his section on *vedana* by stating that feelings arise from sensory or mental contact and that feelings give rise to conditioned responses.<sup>168</sup> But since he describes feelings as the pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral quality of

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<sup>166</sup> Goldstein, 82.

<sup>167</sup> Goldstein, 83.

<sup>168</sup> Goldstein, 81-82.

sensations, emotions, thoughts, and or sensory contact the term feeling becomes ambiguous by losing its contextual grounding in the links of dependent origination. As a result, in the WVM teachings on *satipatthana* as the body, feelings, mind, and objects of mind, the body can all too easily be understood as sensations and feelings can all too easily be understood as emotions.

The GV translation of *vedana* as sensation keeps the experience of *vedana* grounded in the body. The contextualization of *vedana* within the links of dependent origination keeps the distinction clear between pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral sensations (*vedanas*) on the one hand and wholesome or unwholesome intentions/emotions (*sankharas*) on the other. An emotion can be said to be made up of body sensation and a cognitive narrative/intention. GV practice teaches to shift attention away from the narrative/intention of the emotion and towards the sensation of the emotion as a way to go back to the link of sensation (*vedana*) from the link of intention/emotion (*sankhara*). In addition to the brief discussion of the links in relation to feelings mentioned above, Goldstein spends a few pages at the end of the book discussing the links of dependent origination, but the links do not play a central role in his commentary on the *Satipatthana Sutta*.<sup>169</sup> In GV and in the *Samyutta Nikaya* the links play a central role in interpreting the teachings on *satipatthana*.

The section on mind in the *Satipatthana Sutta* teaches to be aware if the mind is caught up in ignorance, craving, or aversion or not; whether it is in a state of concentration or not; and whether the mind has reached a state of liberation or not. Goldstein sums up what mindfulness of mind is by stating, “in this third foundation of mindfulness, mindfulness of mind, the emphasis is simply on noticing the general quality of the mind as it is influenced by different mind states, moods, or emotions.”<sup>170</sup> The section on *dhamma* in the *Satipatthana Sutta* gives lists of

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<sup>169</sup> Goldstein, 211-215.

<sup>170</sup> Goldstein, 105.

wholesome mental formations to cultivate, unwholesome mental formations to abandon, and categories of experience to analyze using the three marks of existence. It lists the five hindrances, the five aggregates, the six sense spheres, the seven factors of awakening, and the Four Noble Truths as possible objects of mindfulness.<sup>171</sup> Like the lists of objects of meditation for the first establishment, this list of *dhammas* to contemplate does not have a particular order. Again, they are more of a map of possible phenomenological experience that can arise in one's awareness. As mentioned above, Goldstein translates *dhamma* as "categories of experience."<sup>172</sup> He sees the list of *dhammas* in the *Satipatthana Sutta* as the way to affect a "transmutation of doctrine into direct experience that brings the teachings alive for us."<sup>173</sup> In other words mindfulness of *dhamma* means to apply the Theravada scholastic doctrinal categories listed in this section of the discourse into one's direct phenomenological experience. The goal is to recognize and cultivate wholesome habit energies, recognize and abandon unwholesome habit energies, and gain insight into the nature of reality.

In the final chapter of his commentary on the *Satipatthana Sutta* entitled "The Realization of Nibbāna" Goldstein equates the realization of *nibbana* with the realization of the "unconditioned" through contemplation of the three marks. He quotes the Buddha from the "Mindfulness of the Body Discourse" (SN 43:1, *Kāyagatāsatisutta*) from the Unconditioned Chapter (*Asaṅkhatasamyutta*) of the *Salayatanavagga* in the *Samyutta Nikaya* as stating that the unconditioned is the "destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, [and] the destruction of delusion."<sup>174</sup> In the same chapter of the *Samyutta Nikaya* he quotes the Buddha from the "Emptiness Concentration Discourse" (SN 43:4, *Suññatasamādhisutta*) to describe how to

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<sup>171</sup> Sujato, "Discourse on Mindfulness Meditation."

<sup>172</sup> Goldstein, *Mindfulness*, 3.

<sup>173</sup> Goldstein, 121.

<sup>174</sup> Goldstein, 401.

meditate on the three marks of existence to realize the unconditioned. Goldstein explains the *Suññatasamādhisutta* by stating the following.

Emptiness concentration is when we see and understand all things as being empty of self. Signless concentration, sometimes called *vipassana samādhi*, abandons the sign of permanence through contemplation of change. And undirected concentration arises when we contemplate the unsatisfying nature of conditioned phenomena and so no longer lean toward that which is impermanence, unreliable, and selfless.

As these insights are brought to maturity, at a certain point the mind opens to the experience of nibbana, the unconditioned, uprooting by stages, all the defilements that keep us bound.<sup>175</sup>

Goldstein therefore describes the realization of *nibbana* as a maturation of cognitive insight into the nature of all conditioned phenomena based on the teachings of the three marks of existence. He does not compare mindfulness of *dhamma* in the *Satipatthana Sutta* with mindfulness of *dhamma* in the *Anapanasati Sutta* (MN:118) or in the discourses of the *anapanasamyutta* of the *Samyutta Nikaya*. His references to the unconditioned in SN 43:1 and to the emptiness concentration in SN 43:4 to explain realization of *nibbana* are from a relatively obscure corner of the *Samyutta Nikaya* in the *Salayatanavagga*. The “Chapter on the Path” (*maggasamyutta*) from the *Mahavagga* which deals with the Eightfold Path is a more obvious and accurately representative place to discuss how the Buddha defined realization of *nibbana*. There the Buddha teaches that the full development of the Eightfold Path results in the “utter destruction” of: the “underlying tendencies” in SN 45:175, the “hindrances” in SN 45:177, the “lower fetters” in SN 45:179 and the “higher fetters” in SN 45:180.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Goldstein, 401.

<sup>176</sup> Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, 1564-1565.

The underlying tendencies are to: lust, aversion, views, doubt, conceit, lust for existence, ignorance, see SN 45:175. The hindrances are: sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt, see SN 45:177. The lower fetters are: identity view, doubt, the distorted grasp of rules and vows, sensual desire, and ill will, see SN 45:179.

The higher fetters are: lust for form, lust for the formless, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance, see SN 45:180.

Aside from a very brief discussion of the first three fetters when talking about stream entry, Goldstein never mentions the ten fetters (*samyojana*) in his book.<sup>177</sup> He often refers to ignorance, craving, and aversion as “defilements” or unwholesome “underlying tendencies” but he never provides the formal list of the underlying tendencies such as in SN 45:175 mentioned above or in the *Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma...* from Theravada scholastic doctrine.<sup>178</sup> In addition, he never discusses the underlying tendencies or defilements in terms of rebirth. He mentions rebirth 14 times in the book, mostly saying belief in rebirth is not required to make good use of *vipassana* meditation practice and Buddhist philosophical teachings. He weighs in on the topic of belief in rebirth in the overall scholarly and popular discussion of Buddhism in the U.S. by discussing his own journey of gradual awakening into intuiting awareness without physical limitation.

The last part of this opening to potentials beyond my own field of experience was the growing meditative insights into the nonmaterial nature of awareness. As we become mindful of the experience of awareness itself, it’s possible to intuit it without any physical limitations.

Each of us has our own relationship to these teachings on rebirth and other realms, and it is important to emphasize that awakening doesn’t depend on any belief. But as the great transmission of buddhadharma from East to West unfolds, it’s helpful not to immediately dismiss what is beyond our limited personal experience, but to simply keep an open mind regarding this and other possibilities.<sup>179</sup>

Goldstein is in effect arguing here for the possibility of rebirth and liberation from rebirth. In doing so he is maintaining his connection to his root lineage of Mahasi *vipassana*. These two paragraphs can be seen as a miniature apologia of Burmese *vipassana* and Theravada scholastic doctrine. But it is only on a couple of pages towards the end of his commentary on the

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<sup>177</sup> Goldstein, *Mindfulness*, 320-324.

<sup>178</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma: The Philosophical Psychology of Buddhism*, trans. Mahāthera Nārada (Onalaska, WA: Pariyatti Publishing, 2020), 411-412.

<sup>179</sup> Goldstein, *Mindfulness*, 331.

*Satipatthana Sutta*. The overall hermeneutic gaze of the book is based on the modern scholastic doctrine of scientific materialism geared towards scholar practitioners in the U.S. healthcare industry. Goldman sets this hermeneutic tone of the scientific materialist gaze with the opening two paragraphs of his commentary.

Mindfulness is such an ordinary word. It doesn't have the spiritual cachet of words like *wisdom* or *compassion* or *love*, and only in recent times has it entered the lexicon of common usage. Growing up in the fifties, I had never even heard the word. And the sixties, of course, had their own unique vocabulary. But beginning in the seventies and continuing until today, mindfulness is coming into its own. It started with meditation retreats introducing the concept—and the practice—to an ever-increasing number of people. And then, through programs like Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction; Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy; mindfulness programs in schools, universities, and businesses; and research in state-of-the-art neuroscience labs, the potential inherent in this capacity of the mind to be present, to be aware of what's happening, is gaining widespread credibility and interest.

As just one example, all patients participating in the Duke Integrative Medicine program at Duke University are introduced to the body-mind relationship and the concept of mindfulness. Jeffrey Brantley, MD, founder of the program, said, "Mindfulness is at the core of everything we do. We believe that the more mindful people can be as they face health challenges, the healthier they will be."<sup>180</sup>

According to Treleaven, "burgeoning scientific interest in mindfulness-based interventions can be attributed to MBSR, an eight week program based largely on teachings from vipassana meditation."<sup>181</sup> Kabat-Zinn earned his PhD in molecular biology from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.<sup>182</sup> When Goleman returned to Harvard to teach after his post doctorate in Asia he mentored Richard Davidson whose PhD research in psychiatry focused on measuring the neural activity of people meditating.<sup>183</sup> Dan Siegel, another Harvard psychiatry PhD and protegee of Goleman, also focused on the interface between meditation and neuroscience in his development

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<sup>180</sup> Goldstein, introduction, Kindle.

<sup>181</sup> Treleaven, "Meditation and Trauma," 25.

<sup>182</sup> Wikipedia, s.v., "Jon Kabat-Zinn," last modified July 23, 2022, 13:41, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jon\\_Kabat-Zinn&oldid=1096237685](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jon_Kabat-Zinn&oldid=1096237685).

<sup>183</sup> Wikipedia, s.v., "Richard Davidson," last modified July 10, 2022, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Richard\\_Davidson&oldid=1084190765](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Richard_Davidson&oldid=1084190765).

of “interpersonal neurobiology.”<sup>184</sup> The WVM institutions of IMS, Spirit Rock, the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, local Insight centers, and MBSR class sites can be said to have co-dependently originated with the neuroscientific research into mindfulness practice and the application of that research in psychotherapy. It is these institutional networks that make up the primary social context that Goldstein’s discussion of the realization of *nibbana* in his commentary on the *Satipatthana Sutta* is addressed to. To briefly mention the possibility that consciousness may not be limited to matter at the end of his commentary in this overall context of the mindfulness industrial complex that he helped bring about is woefully insufficient in representing the traditional Buddhist worldview. The overall impact of his commentary on the *Satipatthana Sutta* is in keeping with the overall legacy of WVM to date, namely that it is an edifice of Buddhist-informed naturalism that is the product of the modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production.

### **Thich Nhat Hanh’s Commentaries on the *Satipatthana Sutta* and the *Anapanasati Sutta***

Thich Nhat Hanh and the WVM can be said to have partnered with each other in establishing an existential humanist interpretation of *satipatthana* theory and practice in the U.S. Thich Nhat Hanh published his primary commentary on the *Satipatthana Sutta* entitled *Transformation and Healing: Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness* in 1990.<sup>185</sup> In that same year Kabat-Zinn published his primary MBSR textbook *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*, for which Thich Nhat Hanh wrote the preface.<sup>186</sup> In 1995 Thich Nhat Hanh participated in the State of the World

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<sup>184</sup> Daniel Goleman, foreword to *Mindsight*, by Dan Siegel (New York: Bantam, 2010), Kindle.

<sup>185</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *Transformation and Healing: Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1990).

<sup>186</sup> Jon Kabat-Zinn and Thich Nhat Hanh, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* (New York: Bantam, 2013), xiii.

Forum in San Francisco sponsored by the Gorbachev Foundation.<sup>187</sup> Ram Dass recorded a video interview with him.<sup>188</sup> The main topic of the interview was how to embrace and transform difficult emotions with mindfulness. In 1996 Thich Nhat Hanh published his commentary on the *Anapanasati Sutta* entitled *Breathe! You are Alive: Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing*.<sup>189</sup> In 1998 he led a 21-day retreat in Vermont on the *Anapanasati Sutta*. Edited transcripts of his talks from that retreat were published in a 2000 book entitled *The Path of Emancipation*.<sup>190</sup> It is his second of two commentaries on the *Anapanasati Sutta* published in English.

Kornfield wrote the introduction to the 2005 edition of Thich Nhat Hanh's book *Being Peace*.<sup>191</sup> In 2007 Thich Nhat Hanh was the keynote speaker for the "Mindfulness and Psychotherapy" conference hosted by UCLA.<sup>192</sup> The other main presenters included WVM Dharma teachers and licensed mental health clinicians Kornfield, Brach, and Trudy Goodman, as well as WVM-associated psychiatrist Dan Siegel. Kornfield published his book *The Wise Heart: A Guide to the Universal Teachings of Buddhist Psychology* in 2008. He begins it by stating "last year I joined with Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh to co-lead a conference on mindfulness and psychotherapy at UCLA."<sup>193</sup> Siegel is a founding co-director of the Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC) at UCLA.<sup>194</sup> His book *Mindsight...* was published 2010.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> "State of the World Forum," the Mindfulness Bell, accessed July 6, 2022, <https://www.mindfulnessbell.org/archive/2016/02/state-of-the-world-forum>; "CNN - World Forum - Sept. 28, 1995," accessed July 6, 2022, [http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9509/world\\_forum/](http://edition.cnn.com/WORLD/9509/world_forum/).

<sup>188</sup> Baba Ram Dass, *Thich Nhat Hanh, Interview Part 1 | Ram Dass Channel*, 2014, recorded in 1995, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jsnUonUZBuY>; Baba Ram Dass, *Thich Nhat Hanh, Interview Part 2 | Ram Dass Channel*, 2014, recorded in 1995, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=edOW5hvB8hs>.

<sup>189</sup> Hanh, *Breathe! You Are Alive*.

<sup>190</sup> Hanh, *Path of Emancipation*.

<sup>191</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh and Jack Kornfield, *Being Peace* (Berkeley CA: Parallax Press, 2005).

<sup>192</sup> "UCLA Extension Hosts Mindfulness and Psychotherapy Conference, Oct. 5-7," PRWeb, accessed April 12, 2022, <https://www.prweb.com/releases/uclaextension/mindfulness/prweb544714.htm>.

<sup>193</sup> Kornfield, *The Wise Heart*.

<sup>194</sup> "Faculty and Staff - UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center - Los Angeles, CA," accessed July 6, 2022, <https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/faculty-staff>.

<sup>195</sup> Siegel, *Mindsight*.

The WVM has traditionally not dealt with the *Anapanasati Sutta*. Perhaps this is because the 16 exercises of *anapanasati* are so explicitly tied to *jhana* practice by Buddhaghosa in the *Visuddhimagga*.<sup>196</sup> Since the WVM relies on the *Visuddhimagga* to canonically legitimate its Mahasi *vipassana* lineage of dry insight, and since the *Satipatthana Sutta* can be interpreted as the discourse par excellence for dry insight practice because it only deals with *vipassana* and not *jhana*, it makes sense for the WVM to see the *Anapanasati Sutta* as outside of its interpretative jurisdiction. Whether he consciously saw this or not, it left a niche for Thich Nhat Hanh to inhabit. He made the unprecedented move of interpreting the 16 exercises of *anapanasati* as a path of dry insight by arguing that *jhana* practice was not part of early Buddhism and that therefore the 16 exercises did not deal with *jhana*. According to Thich Nhat Hanh in *Breathe! You are Alive*, “from my research, it seems to me that the Four Jhanas, the Four Formless Concentrations, and the Nine Concentration Attainments were not introduced into Buddhism as Buddhist practice until one hundred years after the Buddha’s passing.”<sup>197</sup> This claim does not hold up under the weight of Sujato and Thanissaro’s research into early Buddhist texts.

Thich Nhat Hanh’s research focused on the *Anapanasati Sutta* (MN 118) and the *Satipatthana Sutta* (MN 10) as the primary texts on *satipatthana* in the Pali Canon. Like Sujato he compared those Pali texts with their approximate counterparts in the Chinese *Agamas*. But unlike Sujato, he did not refer to the *Samyutta Nikaya* or the *Samyukta Agama* as primary sources for *satipatthana* discourses. In addition, he did not posit that the *Samyutta/Samyukta Nikaya/Agama* was older than the *Majjhima/Madhyama Nikaya/Agama*. To the best of my knowledge, Thich Nhat Hanh was not exposed to, or at least never discussed, Thanissaro’s

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<sup>196</sup> Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification*, 259-286.

<sup>197</sup> Hanh, *Breathe! You Are Alive*, 17.

research arguing that the Buddha taught the *jhanas* as states in which one is aware of the breath, the whole body, and the heart-mind.

Thich Nhat Hanh differed from Buddhaghosa in that he argued that the third and fourth exercises of the first tetrad were about awareness of the whole physical body and calming the whole physical body instead of just awareness of the whole breath body and calming the breath body. My sense is that he assumed the *jhanas* meant the Buddhaghosa *Visudhimagga* understanding of them. As previously discussed in the section of this chapter on Ledi's *Anapanadipani*, Buddhaghosa taught that the object of focus in *jhana* is the counterpoint sign and that therefore *jhana* practice and *vipassana* practice are mutually exclusive. If my assumption is correct then Thich Nhat Hanh, like Thanissaro, can be said to have rightly challenged the Buddhaghosa understanding of *jhana* as not pertaining to early Buddhism. But if Sujato and Thanissaro's research on *anapanasati* and *satipatthana* is correct, then Thich Nhat Hanh was wrong about the Buddha not teaching *jhana* at all.

Like Mahasi *vipassana* and WVM *vipassana*, Thich Nhat Hanh presented the Buddhaghosa Theravada scholastic teachings on the three marks of existence as the Buddha's core theory behind *satipatthana* practice instead of the links of dependent origination. Thus, even though he eschewed the Theravada scholastic teachings on *jhana*, he kept the Theravada scholastic teachings on the three marks of existence. Like the WVM he presents those teachings as an existential humanist philosophy within a dry insight style of *vipassana* practice. Like the WVM he taught that the four establishments of mindfulness provided a phenomenological map to recognize whatever arose in one's awareness. According to Thich Nhat Hanh,

Everything that exists can be placed into one of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness—namely the body, the feelings, the mind, and the objects of mind. “All dharmas” is another way of saying “the objects of mind.” Although all dharmas are

divided into four, in reality they are one, because all Four Establishments of Mindfulness are all objects of the mind.<sup>198</sup>

As can be seen in this quote, like the WVM he translates the first three establishments of mindfulness as mindfulness of the “body,” “feelings,” and “mind.” Perhaps even more than the WVM however, he taught mindfulness of feelings as mindfulness of emotions. In the 100s of talks I heard him give while training as a monk with him (1998-2004) he often used the metaphor of a mother holding a crying baby to talk about mindfulness of emotions.<sup>199</sup> He said that just by holding the baby tenderly and securely, the mother begins to calm the baby down. Then as the holding continues, the cause of the baby’s crying can be organically revealed and responded to.

Unlike the WVM he used Nagarjuna’s teachings on emptiness to interpret Buddhaghosa’s teachings on the three marks existence for the fourth establishment of mindfulness. Instead of teaching that one should contemplate the impermanent, suffering, and no-self nature of all conditioned phenomena to attain insight, he taught that one should contemplate the impermanent, no-self, and *interbeing* nature of all conditioned phenomena to attain insight. Unlike both Buddhaghosa and Nagarjuna however, he framed liberation within existential humanist terms as insight into naturalistic interdependence instead of liberation from rebirth. In the quote below from *The Path of Emancipation* he teaches how to practice mindfulness of the fourth tetrad of *anapanasati* practice that deals with the realization of nirvana.

Yesterday I spoke about the insight of impermanence. Many teachers, including those of ancient Greece and China—Heraclitus and Confucius—gave teachings on impermanence. In the Buddhist tradition, impermanence is not just a description of reality but also an instrument for understanding. You cannot understand impermanence without understanding the teachings of interbeing or emptiness.  
[....]

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<sup>198</sup> Hanh, *Transformation and Healing*, 19.

<sup>199</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *No Mud, No Lotus: The Art of Transforming Suffering* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2014), 15-16.

Yesterday we spoke about the Three Dharma Seals: impermanence, nonself, and nirvana. Nirvana is the subject of contemplation in the fifteenth exercise of mindfulness of breathing proposed by the Buddha. “Contemplating nirvana, I breathe in. Contemplating nirvana I breathe out.” Many of us do not know what contemplating nirvana means. It is as simple as contemplating impermanence. If you contemplate impermanence well, you touch nirvana at the same time.

[....]

[While holding a coin up in his hand he states,] This coin represents the Three Dharma Seals. The head and tail represent impermanence and nonself, and the metal represents nirvana.

[...]

If you touch impermanence deeply, you touch nonself, interbeing, and emptiness. These terms all mean the same thing.<sup>200</sup>

In the beginning of the quote, he states that impermanence is a description of what reality is. To offer non-Buddhist presentations of impermanence he cites the Greek philosopher Heraclitus (536BCE-475BCE) who taught that one never steps in the same river twice<sup>201</sup> and the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551BCE to 479BCE) who taught a secular social ethics based on rational observation of the natural world and human relationships.<sup>202</sup> Thus, he frames impermanence as a metaphysical truth claim about the natural world. He then presents the Buddha as a mindfulness-based existential philosopher who teaches how to use mindfulness to experience existential insight into impermanence. This results in the realization of nirvana via an experience of interbeing, i.e., of emptiness. He frames Nagarjuna’s teachings on emptiness as a doctrine of existential philosophy.

The other main innovation Thich Nhat Hanh developed in teaching *anapanasati* *satipatthana* practice was to use Asanga and Vasubandhu’s teachings on the eight consciousnesses as a Buddhist psychology to contextualize *satipatthana* mindfulness practice

<sup>200</sup> Hanh, *Path of Emancipation*, 166, 170-171.

<sup>201</sup> “Heraclitus,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Daniel W. Graham, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2021 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2021), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/heraclitus/>.

<sup>202</sup> “Confucius,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Mark Csikszentmihalyi, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2020 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2020), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/confucius/>.

with. As discussed in chapter one (p.9-11), he taught that the body, emotions, thoughts, and perceptions were all manifestations of the store consciousness and that physical, emotional, and mental habit energies were stored in the store consciousness as seeds that could get watered and arise in one's awareness. In his commentary on the *Satipatthana Sutta* he translates *samyojana* as "internal formation."<sup>203</sup> Instead of describing the term *samyojana* as the ten fetters that cause rebirth, he describes them as deeply rooted unwholesome habit energies in a person's subconscious. He mainly describes them in terms of emotions. The following quote is his translation of a passage from the *Satipatthana Sutta* in the section on the fourth establishment that deals with the fetters arising from contact between the six sense bases and six sense objects, followed by his commentary. As stated above he translates fetters (*samyojana*) as "internal formations." The use of bold and italicized words and of brackets in the first paragraph are his.

***Eighteenth Exercise-***

**Transforming Repressed Internal Formations**

*He is aware of the eyes[ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind] and aware of the form, [sound, smell, taste, touch, and object of mind], and he is aware of the internal formations which are produced in dependence on these two things. He is aware of the birth of a new internal formation and is aware of abandoning an already produced internal formation, and he is aware when an already abandoned internal formation will not arise again. (This is the same quote from the sutra as Exercise Seventeen, above.)*

This exercise aims at putting us in touch with and transforming internal formations which are buried and repressed in ourselves. The internal formations of desire, anger, fear, feeling worthless, and regret have been suppressed in our subconscious for a long time.

[...]

Without judgment, blame, or criticism for having these feelings or images, we just observe, identify, and accept them in order to see their source and their true nature. If there is pain, we feel the pain, the sadness, or the anger, but we calm them down. Even if we have not seen the roots of the internal formation, the fact that we can greet our pain, our sadness, and our anger in mindfulness already causes our internal knots to lose

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<sup>203</sup> Hanh, *Transformation and Healing*, 104-109. This book was first published in 1990 by Parallax Press, the press of the Unified Buddhist Church which is Thich Nhat Hanh's tax identity for the monastic Order of Interbeing.

some of their strength. Thanks to our vigilant observation, eventually we will see their roots and transform them.<sup>204</sup>

As can be seen in this quote, his description of *satipatthana* practice is like WVM *vipassana* in that it is an open awareness of whatever is arising in terms of the body, emotions, and thoughts. This teaching from Thich Nhat Hanh is very similar to the WVM teaching of RAIN (recognize, accept, investigate, and non-identify) that Treleaven discusses in his dissertation. It is similar to Goldstein's teachings on *satipatthana* in that it is ambiguous in terms of clearly discerning between sensations and emotions. His teaching that a practitioner can be in touch with an internal formation as an emotion without knowing the roots of it suggests the distinction between implicit and explicit memory that is common in trauma therapy and that Siegel teaches via interpersonal neurobiology. In this quote he uses the Western psychology term of the "subconscious." But in most of his teachings on working with painful emotions he would talk about them as mental formations manifesting from the store consciousness. He taught that a person should water the positive seeds of wholesome mental formations before dealing with the negative seeds of unwholesome mental formations. He recommended mindfulness of breathing and wholesome objects of mind for the former. But like the WVM he did not teach about discerning between sensation and emotion the way GV and SE does. To summarize, Thich Nhat Hanh's main contribution to the literature of commentaries on *satipatthana* practice is to offer Mahayana teachings on emptiness and the eight consciousnesses to contextualize the practice. His overall hermeneutic approach is like the WVM in that he imports later Buddhist scholastic teachings into modern scientific scholastic doctrine. Like the WVM he seems to be unaware of the early Buddhist yogic teachings on *satipatthana* that Thai Forest monastics Sujato and Thanissaro have recovered and that GV makes use of to a certain degree.

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<sup>204</sup> Hanh, 104-109.

## Conclusion

The first section of the literature review demonstrated that the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. has mainly been between the traditions of the WVM and of trauma therapy. It discussed how the main theme in the dialogue has been how trauma therapists can integrate WVM *satipatthana* theory and practice and how the WVM can integrate theory and practice from somatic trauma therapy. The second section demonstrated how the dialogue can be historically contextualized as representing the tradition of trauma therapy going back to Freud and the lineage of the WVM going back to Mingun Sayadaw. It also demonstrated how the GV lineage can be traced back to Ledi Sayadaw; the Thai Forest lineages of Sujato and Thanissaro can be traced back to Ajhan Mun; and Thich Nhat Hanh's existential humanist Buddhism can be traced back to Taixu. It argued that the dialogue has left out the theory and practice of GV and the Thai Forest lineages as well as Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on the eight consciousnesses. The third section compared commentaries on canonical *satipatthana* discourses from Sujato, Thanissaro, Goldstein, and Thich Nhat Hanh. It demonstrated that current research from Sujato posits that a) the *Samyutta Nikaya* contains the earliest strata of *satipatthana* discourses in the Pali Canon; that b) those teachings are part of an interconnected network of teachings with the links of dependent origination as the core theory; and that c) the 16 exercises of *anapanasati* is the core contemplative structure and narrative of spiritual progression in *satipatthana* practice. It discussed how Thanissaro's and Goenka's body-centered transcendent teachings on *satipatthana* are in accord with the *Samyutta Nikaya* and how Goldstein and Thich Nhat Hanh's existential humanist and relatively less body-centered teachings on *satipatthana* are not in accord with the *Samyutta Nikaya*.

In the next chapter on methodology a theoretical framework will be put forward that distinguishes between three *modes of knowledge* production. There is the *early Buddhist yogic* mode of knowledge production based on the links of dependent origination and the practice of *anapanasati samadhi*. There is the *later Buddhist scholastic* mode based on the doctrines of the three marks of existence, emptiness, the eight consciousnesses and the *Satipatthana Sutta*. Finally, there is the *modern scientific scholastic* mode based on the theories of evolutionary biology, polyvagal theory, and interpersonal neurobiology, and on the worldview of scientific materialism. The chapter will then present the methodology of mutual critical correlation and place the theoretical framework of the three modes of knowledge production within that methodology. It will discuss the research method of textual comparison used to mutually critically correlate GV with SE in chapter four. The chapter will conclude by presenting the qualitative research method of phenomenological interviewing that was used to interview the six OI psychotherapists with; and how this was done in order to mutually critically correlate their Yogacara psychology with trauma therapy in chapter six.

### *Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods*

The first section of this chapter presents my religious location. The second section presents the theoretical framework of the three modes of knowledge production. The third section introduces the methodology of mutual critical correlation. The fourth section presents the comparative textual method used in this dissertation to mutually critically correlate texts from Buddhism and trauma therapy. The fifth section presents the qualitative research method used to interview the six OI psychotherapists with.

#### **Religious Location**

In an edited volume entitled *Navigating Religious Difference in Spiritual Care and Counseling: Essays in Honor of Kathleen J. Greider*, the editor, pastoral theologian Jill Snodgrass, includes a previously published chapter by Greider titled, “Religious Location and Counseling: Engaging Diversity and Difference in Views of Religion.” In that chapter Greider articulates three interrelated zones of religious location that an interculturally competent spiritual care counselor needs to deeply reflect upon in order not to cause harm to care seekers. The three zones are the (1) “*personal and familial domains*,” (2) “*the historical, sociopolitical, economic, and global terrain in which we are religiously located*,” and (3) “*our appraisal of religious plurality: How do you understand the relationship between the many religious and spiritual traditions, with their sometimes conflicting truth claims?*”<sup>1</sup> I will discuss my religious positionality based on these three categories put forward by Greider.

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<sup>1</sup> Kathleen J. Greider, “Religious Location and Counseling: Engaging Diversity and Difference in Views of Religion,” in *Navigating Religious Difference in Spiritual Care and Counseling: Essays in Honor of Kathleen J. Greider*, ed. Jill L. Snodgrass (Claremont, CA: Claremont Press, 2019), 32-33.

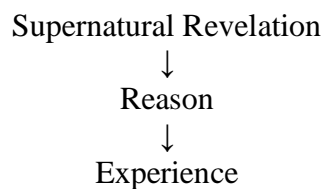
I was born and raised in Fort Worth, Texas. My family was not religious. We did not go to church and spiritual or religious topics were not a topic of discussion among us. By the time I got to middle school I was an atheist. I believed that when a person dies consciousness ceases. My parents and my brother and sister are all white, straight, and cisgendered. My father was a successful water engineer in an employee-owned civil engineering firm that my grandfather co-founded. If asked my parents would say they were Rockefeller Republicans in that they saw themselves as socially progressive but fiscally conservative. However, we lived in an almost all white neighborhood, belonged to an all-white country club, and my siblings and I attended a predominately white K-12 private school. Due to the influence of my sister, who is four years older than me, and progressive teachers at that K-12 private school, by the time I was in high school I was a liberal in that I was consciously antiracist, antisexist, and antihomophobic. I opposed George H.W. Bush's intervention in Kuwait against Saddam Hussein.

I switched from being an atheist to being an agnostic during my first year in college. A philosophy professor in one of his classes drew a horizontal line on the board and put believer on the left end, agnostic in the middle, and atheist on the right. Then he said that the believer and the atheist had more in common with each other than with an agnostic because even though they were at opposite ends of the spectrum, they both had a clear belief about what happens after a person dies. He said that an agnostic suspends belief about the afterlife unless some clear experiential knowledge leads that person to see things otherwise. I realized in that moment that I had no clear evidence that could justify my belief in atheism and so had to admit I was agnostic.

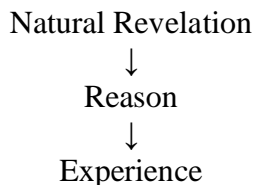
As mentioned in chapter one, even though I majored in film, my main areas of interest in college were body-centered trauma therapy, Buddhist meditation, and African drumming. The summer after I graduated college, I went to see Mother Meera, a Guru from South India living in

Germany. She offered darshan four days a week from her house. A group of about 80 people would sit in silence for two hours and one by one we would go up to her to bow in front of her so she could touch our heads look at us in the eyes. One evening while I was sitting in her presence, I had a very brief but powerful experience of the non-dual ground of being in which I felt that the essence or core of my being was not separate from a spiritual ground of light, bliss, and consciousness that my being was resting in and manifesting from. I felt that my body and ego were clothes that I was wearing but that my experience of this ground of being was beyond the body and mind. I didn't have a memory of a past life, but I felt that rebirth and liberation from rebirth were possible. This consciousness at the heart of my being felt ancient and yet eternally new at the same time. This experience was the main reason I became a monk because I wanted to realize what I had briefly experienced with Mother Meera.

I consider scientific materialism to be a form of religion because it is based in large part on the belief that there is no afterlife, i.e., that consciousness ceases at death. I see this as a belief and not an observed empirical fact because to date there is no empirical evidence to support the claim that consciousness ceases at death or that it is epiphenomenal to matter. Religious studies scholar B. Alan Wallace has compared what he sees as hierarchical dogmatic truth claims from modern Western scientific scholasticism with hierarchical dogmatic truth claims from Western medieval Christian scholasticism. According to Wallace scientific materialism is a form of “cognitive imperialism” that has replaced the cognitive imperialism of Christian medieval scholasticism. Wallace states,



A primary characteristic of this medieval hierarchy was a top-down insistence on conformity to an ideology that was considered to be essentially complete and perfect. Therefore, reason and experience were required to support that ideology, and it was against this ideological imperative that the pioneers of the scientific revolution revolted. With the birth of the “Church Scientific” in the late nineteenth century, which biologist T. H. Huxley claimed was destined to achieve “domination over the whole realm of the intellect,” a new hierarchy of knowledge emerged and has dominated Western academia, the media and secular society at large to the present day:



A primary characteristic of this modern hierarchy is a top-down insistence on conformity to a materialist ideology that is based on three fundamental assertions: (1) the universe emerged solely as a result of physical events occurring at the time of the Big Bang, (2) living organisms evolved solely from inorganic physical processes, (3) mental phenomena emerged solely from organic processes, and religious beliefs and contemplative experiences emerged solely from all the above. Virtually all academic research is required to conform to those three unquestioned and unsubstantiated articles of faith.<sup>2</sup>

I consider myself to be an adherent of perennial philosophy in that I see the early Buddhist goal of realizing *nibbana*, the Christian mystical goal of union with God, the Chan Buddhist goal of realizing Buddha Nature, the Advaita Vedanta goal of realizing the Self, and the Daoist internal alchemy goal of realizing the Way as all being very similar goals. In other words, I consider them as all possibly being about awakening to and realizing a non-dual ground of being. Since I take this perennial view, I am skeptical of any exclusivist doctrine which argues that any one religion has the sole access point to spiritual awakening or that there is no spiritual awakening possible. I am agnostic as to the existence of deities and the spirit world. I am favorably disposed to the common view in indigenous cultures that there is an ancestor world that a person’s spirit

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<sup>2</sup> B. Alan Wallace, “A Response to ‘Against Cognitive Imperialism,’” *Religion East and West*, no. 8 (October 2008): 28.

can be reborn into after death and that there are spirits and other beings that can be related to via shamanic theory and practice.

During the 12 years I was a Buddhist monk my main focus was on my meditation practice and my relationship to my spiritual teachers in order to attain spiritual awakening. I see the quest for spiritual awakening as a multi-lifetime project that I have made a modest beginning at in this lifetime and that I am still striving to achieve. In 2011 I disrobed and in 2012 I began graduate school. I wanted to be in a loving intimate relationship again and I wanted to convert my monastic spiritual training into a livelihood as a lay Buddhist minister. While in graduate school I became a socialist based on the following experiences: conversations with socialist friends; reading *The Socialist Manifesto: The Case for Radical Politics in an Era of Extreme Inequality* by Jacobin magazine founder Bhaskar Sunkara; watching the Michael Brooks Show on YouTube; and listening to the Chapo Trap House podcast. I volunteered for the Bernie Sanders 2020 campaign and I am a member of the Democratic Socialists of America. I consider myself a Buddhist socialist who seeks collective material, psychological, and spiritual liberation for the planet.

## **Methodology**

### **The Theoretical Framework of the Three Modes of Knowledge Production**

In the previous chapter the history, theory, and practice of five different Buddhist and trauma therapy traditions were discussed, namely the Thai Forest, GV, WVM, and OI Buddhist traditions and the tradition of trauma therapy in general. The comparison of their interpretations of *satipatthana* theory and practice from discourses in the Pali Canon revealed three different hermeneutic layers based on three different modes of knowledge production. I have named those

three different modes the *early Buddhist yogic*, the *later Buddhist scholastic*, and the *modern scientific scholastic*. Each mode has its figure heads, institutional structures, worldview, core theory and practice, ways of maintaining its teachings, goal(s) of practice, and contemporary promulgators. The above-mentioned five traditions of theory and practice may make use of one or more of these three modes of knowledge production. This theoretical framework enables the different elements of theory and practice within these five traditions to be historically contextualized and more easily related to each other.

### **The Early Buddhist Yogic Mode of Knowledge Production**

The primary figurehead of the early Buddhist yogic mode of knowledge production is Shakyamuni Buddha (sometime between 563-400 BCE). Other figureheads include the monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen featured in the discourses of the *Samyutta Nikaya*. The institutional structure of this mode is the fourfold community of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen of the early Buddhism. At the time of the Buddha the monastics lived in forests outside of villages or parks outside of cities. The geographic territory was the network of villages and cities along the Ganges River and its tributaries in northeast India. The cities were engaged in riverine and overland trade with one another. Indologist Johannes Bronkhorst has referred to this region east of the confluence of the Yamuna River and the Ganges River as Greater Magadha. According to Bronkhorst,

Greater Magadha covers Magadha and its surrounding lands: roughly the geographical area in which the Buddha and Mahavira [the founder of Jainism] lived and taught. With regard to the Buddha, this area stretched by and large from Sravasti, the capital of Kosala, in the north-west to Rajgir, the capital of Magadha, in the southeast. This area was neither without culture nor religion. It is in this area that most of the second urbanization of South Asia took place from around 500 BCE onward. It is also in this area that a number of religious and spiritual movements arose, most famous among them Buddhism and Jainism. All these events took place within, and were manifestations of, the culture of that part of northern India. We know very little and have to depend on indirect evidence for information about the aspects of this culture

that preceded Buddhism and Jainism, and about those that did not find direct expression in these two religions.<sup>3</sup>

The region of Greater Magadha was geographically and culturally distinct from the network of Vedic villages in northwest India. By Vedic I mean the culture that was home to the Brahmin priests who maintained the oral teachings of the Vedas in Sanskrit, the classical teachings of Hinduism. During the first few hundred years of early Buddhism brick monasteries were built in Greater Magadha next to brick stupas (reliquaries) that contained relics of the Buddha and other Buddhist monastics considered to have reached some level of spiritual attainment. These were mainly located in parks outside of cities.

Under the Mauryan emperors Chandragupta (340-298BCE) Bindusara (?-273BCE) and Ashoka (304-232 BCE), the network of city states expanded from Greater Magadha to include most of the Indian subcontinent and parts of what is now Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Chandragupta tolerated the different traditions of wandering ascetics and Vedic Brahmins within his realm which included Buddhism, Jainism, Brahminism, the Ajivikas, and others. Ashoka maintained the same policy but he himself was Buddhist. He patronized Buddhism by building and maintaining monasteries and by sending out Buddhist monastic ambassadors to neighboring regions of the empire. The early Buddhist worldview from the time of the Buddha to Ashoka was that humans were living in the realm of samsara, that they were reborn based on their karma, and that liberation from rebirth was possible via the Eightfold Path as part of the Four Noble Truths.

The core theory of early Buddhism was the links of dependent origination which explained the mechanics of karma and rebirth. The core practice was mindfulness of breathing concentration (*anapanasati samadhi*) using the contemplative structure of the four establishments of mindfulness (*satipatthana*). The teachings were maintained through the oral

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<sup>3</sup> Johannes Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha: Studies in the Culture of Early India* (Leiden, Neth.: Brill, 2007).

tradition of monastics engaged in group chanting. The goal of practice was threefold, namely greater welfare and happiness in the present life, favorable rebirth, and liberation from rebirth. Two contemporary promulgators of this early Buddhist yogic knowledge production are Thai Forest monks Sujato from the Ajhan Cha lineage and Thanissaro from the Ajhan Lee lineage. The GV lineage contains early Buddhist yogic elements, namely the teaching on the links of dependent origination as the core theory and the meditation practice that includes mindfulness of breathing and mindfulness of the whole body.

### **The Later Buddhist Scholastic Mode of Knowledge Production**

The primary figureheads of the later Buddhist scholastic mode of knowledge production are Nagarjuna (150-250CE) representing Madhyamika Mahayana scholasticism, Asanga (300-370 CE) and Vasubandhu (Fourth Century CE) representing Yogacara Mahayana scholasticism, and Buddhaghosa (Fifth Century CE) representing Theravada scholasticism. The institutional structure for this mode of knowledge production is still the fourfold community of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen with the monastery as its center. But now reading and writing, most likely introduced to Mahayana Buddhist monastics by sea merchants, becomes the main way that the teachings of the tradition are maintained and transmitted.<sup>4</sup> Nagarjuna is thought to have been based in the city of Amaravathi in the Satavahana Kingdom (230 BCE-220 CE) of central India. Asanga and Vasubandhu were based in the kingdom of Gandhara (800 BCE-599CE) in what is now Pakistan and Afghanistan. Mahayana Buddhism spread through Central Asia to East Asia through caravan routes, and it spread through South, Southeast, and East Asia through maritime networks of trade.

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<sup>4</sup> Lewis R. Lancaster, *The Buddhist Maritime Silk Road* (Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Fo Guang Shan Institute of Humanistic Buddhism, 2022), 129.

Buddhaghosa was based at the Great Monastery (*Mahavihara*) in Anuradhapura, the capitol of the kingdom with the same name (437 BCE–1017 CE). The tradition of Theravada Buddhism claims that a Fourth Buddhist Council was held in Sri Lanka in the First Century BCE to write down the Pali Canon because the number of monastics in Sri Lanka was dwindling due to famine, hence there was a fear that the canon could be lost.<sup>5</sup> The project of writing the canon down had royal patronage to make it possible. Theravada Buddhism spread through Southeast Asia through maritime trade.

The worldview of later scholastic Buddhism is still samsara and liberation from samsara, but the core theory is no longer the links of dependent origination. For Nagarjuna the core theory is the teachings on emptiness, for Asanga and Vasubandhu the core theory is the teachings on the eight consciousnesses and Buddha Nature, for Buddhaghosa the core theory is teachings on the three marks of existence. The core practices in Mahayana Buddhism are different forms of calming (*shamatha*) meditation and insight (*vipashyana*) meditation based on different contemplative structures. The core practices for Buddhaghosa is *jhana* practice focused on the counterpoint sign followed by insight practice focused on the three marks of existence via the four establishments of mindfulness. As mentioned above, the teachings in later Buddhist scholastic knowledge production are maintained primarily through reading and writing by scholar monks. The goal is still the threefold goal of early Buddhist yogic knowledge production, namely greater welfare and happiness in the present live, favorable rebirth, and liberation from rebirth. But realization of nirvana is described as attaining insight into the nature of reality instead of yogic release from the links of dependent origination. The Mahayana tradition also adds the optional goal of becoming a bodhisattva who holds off realization of nirvana until they

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<sup>5</sup>Wikipedia, s.n., “Fourth Buddhist Council,” last modified July 29, 2022, 16:24, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Fourth\\_Buddhist\\_council&oldid=1063516672](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Fourth_Buddhist_council&oldid=1063516672).

have helped all beings realize nirvana. Another Mahayana innovation is Pure Land Buddhism where practitioners engage in devotional practice in order to be reborn in a heavenly realm where they can realize nirvana.

The GV lineage is a promulgator of the later Buddhist scholastic mode in that it sees itself as a path of dry insight as understood within the theoretical framework of Buddhaghosa. In addition, it also draws from the scholastic teachings of the *abidhamma* from the Pali Canon and from scholastic commentaries on the *abidhamma*. The WVM is a promulgator of the later Buddhist scholastic mode in that it also sees itself as a path of dry insight as understood within the theoretical framework of Buddhaghosa. The OI is a promulgator of the later Buddhist scholastic mode in that it makes use of the Buddhaghosa structure of dry insight into the four establishments of mindfulness, the Madhyamika teachings of Nagarjuna on emptiness, and the Yogacara teachings of Asanga and Vasubandhu on the eight consciousnesses. The WVM and the OI depart from the later Buddhist scholastic mode in that they tend not to focus on the goals of favorable rebirth and liberation from rebirth. Instead, they mainly just focus on the goal of greater welfare and happiness in the present lifetime under existential humanist terms. The OI still maintains the institutional structure of the fourfold community of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen while the WVM is almost entirely a twofold community of laymen and laywomen.

### **The Modern Scientific Scholastic Mode of Knowledge Production**

Two primary figureheads of the modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production that are relevant to this dissertation are Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). The institutional structures that this mode of knowledge production relies on in terms of physical buildings are modern research universities, hospitals, scientific laboratories, private and public elementary schools and colleges/universities, and private and public

healthcare system buildings other than hospitals. The institutional structure also includes the modern academies of arts and sciences within modern nation states as well as various professional guilds such as the American Psychiatric Association in the U.S. The geographic location of this mode of knowledge production originated in Europe and then spread throughout the world through European colonialism. Two core theories have been Darwin's theory of evolutionary biology and Freud's psychoanalytic theory of the conscious and unconscious mind. These theories are based on the worldview of scientific materialism that sees consciousness as epiphenomenal to matter. Herman, Van der Kolk, Briere, and Scott's presentations of trauma theory can be seen as elaborations of Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Porge's polyvagal theory and Siegel's neurobiological theory of implicit and explicit memory both can be seen as elaborations of Darwin's theory of evolution and as interpersonal neurobiological supplements to Freud's psychoanalytic theory.

The core practice of the modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production that is relevant to this dissertation is the practice of trauma therapy that has evolved from Freud's practice of psychoanalysis. Mainstream trauma therapy in the U.S. can be seen as a continuation of the Freudian tradition. Somatic trauma therapies such as SE, Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, and EMDR can be seen as further evolutions of the tradition of trauma therapy by adding in interpersonal neurobiology. The theory and practice of this mode of knowledge production is maintained through reading and writing, lectures, and clinical training through graduate degree programs and clinical training sites. The goal of this mode of knowledge production is greater welfare and happiness within the present life. The goals of favorable rebirth and liberation from rebirth are not acknowledged. As such, the scholastic doctrine of this mode of knowledge production is a doctrine of naturalism.

The modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production is historically rooted in Aristotle as the prototypical Western scientist and in Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum as the prototypical Western university and academy of arts and sciences. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy "Aristotle is properly recognized as the originator of the scientific study of life."<sup>6</sup> Aristotle grew up in the royal court of Macedonia under King Phillip.<sup>7</sup> His father was the royal physician to King Phillip. Starting at around 17 or 18 years of age, Aristotle trained under Plato at the Academy outside the city gates of Athens. When Plato died in 347 BCE Aristotle went to the Isle of Lesbos to apply his scientific methodology that he had developed under Plato. His methodology was based on observation of the natural world through the senses, an understanding of medicine, and rational reason and debate. To learn about biology Aristotle observed animals in nature. He also killed them and dissected them. He had a partner, his student from the Academy named Theophrastus (371-287 BC), who focused on observing plants and dissecting them.

Aristotle had a highly sophisticated view of the soul in plants, animals, and humans. He saw the soul in biological organisms as a complex manifestation or principle of the different natural systems that make up the organism. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,

According to Aristotle's theory, a soul is a particular kind of nature, a principle that accounts for change and rest in the particular case of living bodies, i.e. plants, nonhuman animals and human beings. The relation between soul and body, in Aristotle's view, is also an instance of the more general relation between form and matter: thus an ensouled, living body is a particular kind of in-formed matter. Slightly simplifying things by limiting ourselves to the sublunary world, [...] we can describe the theory as furnishing a unified explanatory framework within which all vital functions alike, from metabolism to reasoning, are treated as functions

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<sup>6</sup> James Lennox, "Aristotle's Biology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, winter 2019 ed., ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2019), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/aristotle-biology/>.

<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia, s.v. "Aristotle," last modified September 2, 2022, 11:41, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle>.

performed by natural organisms of suitable structure and complexity. The soul of an animate organism, in this framework, is nothing other than its system of active abilities to perform the vital functions that organisms of its kind naturally perform, so that when an organism engages in the relevant activities (e.g., nutrition, movement or thought) it does so in virtue of the system of abilities that is its soul.<sup>8</sup>

In plainer language one could say that Aristotle taught that a person's soul was an emergent property of the natural systems that make up the person as a natural organism. This definition does not entertain the possibility of rebirth. It can be said to be a doctrine of scientific materialism in that it implies that when a person dies, the soul ceases. Plato and Aristotle were the first Greeks to start writing down the oral tradition of Greek Philosophy. Aristotle recorded his scientific research as a piece of scholastic doctrine in what could be seen as the field of natural science. Darwin's work can be seen as a continuation of Aristotle's work. Thus, the roots of the modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production can be traced to Aristotle, the Academy in Athens where he trained under Plato, and the Lyceum in Athens where he taught.

### **Summary of the Three Modes of Knowledge Production**

The Buddha is the primary figurehead for the early Buddhist yogic mode of knowledge production. The institutional structure is the fourfold community of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen centered around monasteries. The worldview is samsara and liberation from samsara. The core theory is the links of dependent origination. The core practice is *anapanasati samadhi* using the contemplative structure of *satipatthana*. The teachings of this mode are maintained and transmitted orally. The threefold goals of practice are greater welfare and happiness in the present life, favorable rebirth, and liberation from rebirth. Nagarjuna, Asanga, Vasubandhu, and Buddhaghosa are the primary figureheads of the later Buddhist scholastic mode of knowledge

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<sup>8</sup> Christopher Shields, "Aristotle's Psychology," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, winter 2020 ed, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2020), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2020/entries/aristotle-psychology/>.

production. The institutional structure is still the fourfold community centered around monasteries but now monasteries function as universities with reading and writing. The worldview is still samsara and liberation from samsara. The core theories are the teachings on emptiness, the eight consciousnesses, and the three marks of existence. The core practices are different variations of tranquility (Pali *samatha* Skt *Shamatha*) and insight (Pali *vipassana* Skt *Vipashyana*) meditation. The teachings are maintained and transmitted through reading and writing. The goal is still the traditional threefold goal. The primary figureheads of the modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production in terms of trauma therapy are Darwin and Freud. Aristotle is the ancient figurehead. The institutional structures are the modern education and healthcare systems that originated in Europe and their attendant academies of arts and sciences. The worldview is scientific materialism. The core theories are Darwin's evolutionary biology and Freud's psychoanalytic theory as the basis of the practice of Western psychiatry/psychology. The teachings are maintained and transmitted through reading and writing. The goal is greater welfare and happiness in the present life. Since it is a doctrine of naturalism rebirth and liberation from rebirth are not entertained.

### **The Methodology of Mutual Critical Correlation**

As discussed in chapter one, systematic theologian Paul Tillich developed the "correlation method" of theology in which he correlated questions from existential philosophy with answers from Christian theology. He was influenced by the forms of Freudian and Jungian psychotherapy as a practice in which a person learns how to accept the contents of his/her/their psyche by sharing it through talking and by having that content be accepted by a therapist. He posited that this process of acceptance could be taken further into a religious dimension by a

person opening up to God as the ground of being and experiencing being accepted by God.<sup>9</sup> As also discussed in chapter one, Catholic systematic theologian David Tracy critiqued Tillich's method as being juxtaposition instead of correlation because he only put the questions of existential philosophy in relation to the answers from Christian theology. He did not include the original questions from Christianity that the Christian answers came from, nor the answers from existential philosophy to its own questions. Thus, there was not a thorough critical examination of all the factors involved. In response to Tillich's correlation method Tracy developed what he called the "revisionist model" of "critical correlation."<sup>10</sup> In summing up what he saw as the task of contemporary Christian theology using this revised correlation method, Tracy states the following.

In short, the revisionist theologian is committed to what seems clearly to be the central task of contemporary Christian theology: the dramatic confrontation, the mutual illumination and corrections, the possible basic reconciliation between the principal values, cognitive claims, and existential faiths of both a reinterpreted post-modern consciousness and a reinterpreted Christianity.<sup>11</sup>

I see myself as a Buddhist practical theologian making use of Tracy's revisionist model of critical correlation to mutually critically correlate theory and practice from Buddhism and from trauma therapy. I do this as a Buddhist lay minister in the service of the living contemporary traditions of Buddhist theory and practice, i.e., Buddha *Dhamma* (Skt Dharma). One could say there is an element of dramatic confrontation involved in my work for the following reasons. I am challenging the worldview of scientific materialism with the worldview of Buddhism which claims that rebirth is happening and that liberation from rebirth is possible. Relatedly I am challenging the understanding of human development in Western psychiatry and psychology to

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<sup>9</sup> *Carl Rogers and Paul Tillich p.1*, 1960, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gHSKdX66tY>; *Carl Rogers and Paul Tillich p.2*, 1960, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIRzf6SRfZI>.

<sup>10</sup> Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order*, 32.

<sup>11</sup> Tracy, 32.

expand and include the goals of favorable rebirth and liberation from rebirth in addition to its standard biological, psychological, and sociological benchmarks of human development. I am challenging the Buddhist tradition to take more seriously the interpersonal neurobiological understanding of trauma from the field of trauma therapy and to integrate trauma therapy theory and practice into Buddhist theory and practice. Thus, I am challenging Buddhism to further flesh out its threefold goals of practice—especially the goal of greater welfare and happiness in the present life—by integrating trauma therapy theory and practice *but without succumbing to the unfounded truth claim that consciousness ceases at death*. Relatedly, I am challenging the Buddhist tradition to develop the social contexts necessary to recognize and respond to trauma at the individual, congregational, and collective levels.

As this dissertation will argue, the Buddha's teachings on the links of dependent of origination via the practice of GV and Porge's polyvagal theory via the practice of SE can offer both traditions mutual illumination and corrections. The same holds true for the teachings on the eight consciousnesses as practiced by the OI participants of this dissertation and Siegel's understanding of implicit and explicit memory as practiced by the field of trauma therapy in general. This mutual critical correlation could lead to, as this dissertation will argue, an integrated model of theory and practice in which all three modes of knowledge production are consciously recognized, made use of, and put into relation with each other.

The hermeneutic trend of the dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. has been for WVM Buddhists and trauma therapists to import Theravada scholastic teachings on *satipatthana* into the existential humanist context of trauma therapy and to supplement that theory and practice with somatic trauma therapy theory and practice. The early Buddhist yogic teachings on the links of dependent origination from GV and on *anapanasati samadhi* from the

Thai Forest tradition have been overlooked, ignored, and or suppressed by the dialogue. The Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses have not yet been considered by the dialogue. This speaks to the need for a field of Buddhist practical theology to be developed so that the traditional Buddhist side of the dialogue can be represented. It also speaks to the need for Buddhist lay and monastic ministers to be empowered to make use of an integrated theory and practice of Buddhism and trauma therapy that is primarily rooted in Buddhist theory and practice. As it stands now it is just Buddhist-informed psychotherapists and WVM Dharma teachers being empowered by the dialogue. A true mutual critical correlation between Buddhist scholar practitioners and trauma therapy scholar practitioners using this theoretical framework could lead to a reconciliation between traditional Buddhists and trauma therapists through an integrated use of early Buddhist yogic, later Buddhist scholastic, and modern scientific scholastic modes of knowledge production.

## **Methods**

### **Critical Comparison of Texts**

Schleiermacher is seen as the modern founder of hermeneutics, the scholarly practice of interpretation. This is in addition to his establishing the threefold division of modern Protestant theology into the disciplines of historical, systematic, and practical theology. For Schleiermacher, hermeneutics meant the interpretation of the Bible. As hermeneutics developed it expanded to include the interpretation of other texts, then art in general, and then—as phenomenology—the practice of interpreting experience itself. This dissertation is focused on critically comparing a) the interpretation of Buddhist canonical texts and commentaries on those texts, with b) the interpretation of trauma therapy texts by trauma therapy scholar practitioners.

Because the Buddhist texts deal with meditation practice and because the trauma therapy texts deal with the practice of trauma therapy, this dissertation also focuses on critically comparing the phenomenological experience of meditation and of trauma therapy.

To give this critical comparison more focus the phenomenon of suffering and how to respond to it from Buddhism will be critically compared to the phenomenon of trauma and how to respond to it from trauma therapy. As discussed in chapter one, practical theologian Don Browning described applying the revised correlation method to practical theology by stating the following. “The same method applied to practical theology means a critical correlation between the norms for human action and fulfillment revealed in interpretations of the Christian witness *and* the norms for action and fulfillment implicit in various interpretations of ordinary human experience.”<sup>12</sup> This dissertation will focus on the norms for human action and fulfillment within interpretations of Buddhist theory and practice, and within interpretations of trauma therapy theory and practice.

In chapter four, the next chapter, I compare texts from GV with texts from SE. The GV texts include the edited collection of discourses Goenka gives for the standard ten-day GV course, his commentary on the *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*, and three articles by the Vipassana Research Institute on the role of sensation/feeling (*vedana*) in Buddhist theory and practice.<sup>13</sup> The SE texts include Levine’s two main books on SE and the article he co-authored explaining SE as using interoception and proprioception.<sup>14</sup> Secondary Buddhist texts and somatic trauma therapy texts will be drawn from to contextualize GV and SE within the theoretical framework of

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<sup>12</sup> Browning, “Practical Theology and Religious Education,” 80.

<sup>13</sup> Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*; Goenka, *Satipatthana Sutta Discourses*; Khin and Goenka, *Sayagyi U Ba Khin Journal*.

<sup>14</sup> Levine, *Waking the Tiger*; Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice*; Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau, “Somatic Experiencing.”

the three modes of knowledge production. In addition, I will draw from my first-hand experience of attending two GV ten-day retreats, of receiving SE informed somatic trauma therapy, and of attending a three-day SE training.

The theory and practice of GV will be presented using the structure of the Four Noble Truths. In other words, I will present how GV understands suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation. I will compare this with how SE understands trauma, its cause, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation. I will analyze where GV and SE theory and practice overlap and where they diverge. I so doing I will build the scaffolding for an integrated theory and practice to be developed.

In chapter five I will present the themes that emerged from the phenomenological interviews of the six OI participants. The qualitative research method used to conduct the interviews and discern the themes from the interview transcripts will be discussed in the next and final section of this chapter. In chapter six I will analyze the themes of the interviews within the theoretical framework of the three modes of knowledge production. That analysis will involve comparing how the OI participants understand and respond to suffering from their Buddhist theory and practice and how they understand and respond to trauma from their trauma therapy theory and practice. To help explain their OI Buddhist theory and practice I will draw from Thich Nhat Hanh's commentaries on *satipatthana* theory and practice and on the Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses.<sup>15</sup> To help explain the OI participants' trauma therapy theory and practice I will draw from the work of Briere, Scott, Herman, Ogden, Miller-Karas, and Siegel.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Hanh, *Breathe! You Are Alive*; Hanh, *Transformation and Healing* "Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness"; Hanh, *Understanding Our Mind*; Hanh, *Path of Emancipation*.

<sup>16</sup> Briere and Scott, *Principles of Trauma Therapy*; Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*; Siegel, *Mindsight*; Miller-Karas, *Building Resilience to Trauma*; Ogden et al., *Trauma and the Body*; Ogden and Fisher, *Sensorimotor Psychotherapy*.

## Phenomenological Interviews

I conducted six interviews of OI members who were psychotherapists. The interviews were conducted over Zoom in May of 2019. Each interview lasted between 90 to 120 minutes. At that time, I was also an OI member. I joined the OI in 1998 when I became a monk with Thich Nhat Hanh. Although I still remain on good terms with the OI, I have since left the OI to co-found a lay order of Buddhist ministers called the Dhamma Vinaya Order.<sup>17</sup> The qualitative research method I used was phenomenological interviewing. I used a modified version of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). According to psychologists Jonathan Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin in their book on IPA, “IPA is a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences. IPA is phenomenological in that it is concerned with exploring experience in its own terms.”<sup>18</sup> I was interested in exploring the OI participants’ experience of how they integrate Buddhist theory and practice with trauma therapy theory and practice; how they experience offering Buddhist-informed trauma therapy; and how they experience offering trauma-therapy-informed Buddhist spiritual care.

I used the IPA research structure of developing the research questions, conducting the interviews, transcribing the interviews, reading through the interviews and “coding” them for sub-themes, developing themes from the sub-themes, writing a report summarizing the themes, and then writing an analysis of the report using a theoretical framework. My research method was consistent with typical IPA research in that I interviewed a small sample size, that the

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<sup>17</sup> I left the OI for two reasons. One is that I choose to interpret the fifth of the five lay precepts as not abusing substances such as alcohol or cannabis as opposed to the OI interpretation which calls for complete abstinence. Second, in order to make a living as a Buddhist minister I have co-founded an online Buddhist temple for Buddhist ministers to offer Buddhist spiritual care and counseling with a group of long-term Dharma practitioners. We created the Dhamma Vinaya Order so we can work as ordained ministers and so we can train new Buddhist ministers.

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin, *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2009).

interviews were semi-structured, and that the transcripts were analyzed on a case-by-case basis before analyzing them together as a whole.<sup>19</sup> My research method differed from IPA in three ways. One is that instead of using the Western phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), I used the Buddhist phenomenology of the Buddha and of Asanga and Vasubandhu. In other words, I used the Buddhist phenomenological maps of the links of dependent origination, the four establishments of mindfulness, and the eight consciousnesses as my phenomenological theory. Another difference is that instead of using hermeneutics through the academic discipline of psychology as IPA tends to do, I made use of hermeneutics via the academic discipline of practical theology. A third difference is that instead of only focusing on the participants' understanding of their experience in their own terms during the interviews, at times I would share my own understanding of my own similar or related experience.

I went into the interviews thinking I would just focus on the interviewees' experiences on their own terms. But in the first interview and in subsequent interviews the interviewees would directly ask me about my experience. In addition, there were other times where the interviewees and I would co-create meaning around our phenomenological experiences. After conducting some of the interviews I remembered reading practical theologian Courtney Goto's three-perspective approach to doing qualitative research on religious communities in her book *Taking on Practical Theology: The Idolization of Context and the Hope of Community*. When I went back to her book, I realized that her approach fit better with what was happening in the interviews. Goto describes three different relational stances or perspectives that a practical theologian can take up in doing qualitative research on a religious community, namely the

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<sup>19</sup> Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 3-4.

“critical objective,” the “critical subjective,” and the “critical intersubjective.” According to Goto,

In practical theology, three approaches (critical objective, critical subjective, and critical intersubjective) represent different ways of discerning, understanding, and analyzing a faith community’s context, though one might add others. First, in what I am calling a “critical objective” approach the researcher takes a distanced point of view from the object of study, applying standard frames of analysis that originate from the researcher’s professional setting to familiarize and illumine a faith community’s context. Second, in a “critical subjective” approach, the researcher attempts to understand context as an insider might know it. The researcher privileges the subjects’ point of view (i.e., that of members of the faith community), though he takes advantage of being able to make some observations that an insider might not have had. Theory is used to support and further illumine what is lived by the subjects, but the researcher attempts to be guided by cues from the faith community. Third, a “critical intersubjective” approach to context assumes that what is revealed in research takes shape and form in the dynamic encounter between the lifeworlds of all participants in the research—the academic(s) as well as members of the faith community under investigation.<sup>20</sup>

I took up the critical objective approach to the interviews by being a PhD student in practical and pastoral theology who wanted to conduct qualitative research on six members of the OI who were psychotherapists. I was a scholar practitioner trained in the theory and practice of practical and pastoral theology. I was also an outsider in that I had been a monk in the OI before becoming a lay member whereas the participants had always been lay members. In addition, I was an outsider in that I had trained with other Buddhist and Hindu teachers as a monk whereas the OI participants had mainly trained with Thich Nhat Hanh and the OI community. I took up the critical subjective approach by asking the participants what their experience of Buddhism and trauma therapy was as an OI member and as a psychotherapist. I related to them as a fellow lay OI member who had clinical experience offering one on one counseling sessions with people to work on trauma. This was the main approach I used. I was asking them to describe their

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<sup>20</sup> Courtney Goto, *Taking on Practical Theology: The Idolization of Context and the Hope of Community* (Leiden Netherlands: Brill, 2018), 91-92.

experience in their own way on their own terms. I took up the critical intersubjective approach during the interviews when the participants asked me my opinion about a question we were talking about. I would also say that there were times when we were engaging in the OI practice of “Dharma Discussion.” This is a regular practice in the OI where two or more people are trying to build collective insight into the Dharma by sharing back and forth with each other. This happened in the interviews when I or the participant started to say something, then paused or ran out of words, and then the other person would finish the sentence or fill in an open space.

I approached the OI by first contacting a senior lay OI Dharma teacher to ask permission to do the research. She referred my request to the North American Dharma Teachers Council of the OI. There was no objection from the Council to my conducting the research. I then proposed to the senior Dharma teacher a few names of people to interview and asked if they seemed like good candidates. I also asked if she had any other recommendations. We settled on a list of six people. I emailed those people to ask if they would agree to be interviewed. Once a person agreed, I emailed them an informed consent form, a background questionnaire, and the interview questions. We then scheduled the interview on Zoom. I recorded the interviews using the Zoom recording function. I downloaded the audio files onto my password protected laptop as well as on a password protected external hard drive. I transcribed the interviews and coded them using the Atlas.Ti qualitative research software

*Chapter Four: A Mutual Critical Correlation of Goenka Vipassana and Somatic Experiencing*

This chapter mutually critically correlates the GV understanding of the Four Noble Truths with the SE understanding of trauma, its cause, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation. It uses the theoretical framework of the three modes of knowledge production to contextualize the different elements of theory and practice within GV and SE and to relate them to each other. The analytical goal of this chapter is to demonstrate where GV and SE theory and practice overlap and where they diverge in order to create a preliminary integrated map of theory and practice. I engage in this analysis as a Buddhist practical theologian and Buddhist minister engaged in the development and practice of Buddhist spiritual care and counseling.

**The Goenka Vipassana Understanding of Suffering Compared to the Understanding of Trauma in Somatic Experiencing**

The core theory that GV uses to interpret the Four Noble Truths is the 12 links of dependent origination. The core theory that SE uses to define what trauma is and how to recover from it is the polyvagal theory developed by Stephen Porges. The interpretation of the Four Noble Truths using the 12 links can be traced back to the early Buddhist yogic mode of knowledge production. The polyvagal theory is based in the Darwinian theory of evolutionary biology and is a product of the modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production.

In the “Day Five Discourse” of the book *Discourse Summaries* Goenka provides an overview of the Four Noble Truths. He starts by stating that suffering is unfulfilled craving and aversion as well as identification with and attachment to the five aggregates as self.<sup>1</sup> He goes on

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<sup>1</sup> Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*, 39-40.

to state that “obviously the sufferings of life—disease, old age, death, physical and mental pain—are inevitable consequences of being born.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, Goenka states that suffering is unfulfilled desires, i.e., unfulfilled craving and aversion, physical and mental pain, and identification with and attachment to the five aggregates as self. This is in keeping with the Buddha’s definition of suffering in the “Discourse on Rolling Forth the Wheel of Dhamma” (SN 56:11) in the *Samyutta Nikaya*.<sup>3</sup> So far, this definition of suffering can be understood within an existential humanist worldview as the inevitable pain of life as well as the existential angst that arises from identifying with the body and mind as self. But Goenka goes on to contextualize suffering more deeply as the process of rebirth.

Goenka states that the “immediate cause” of birth is the “physical union of parents, but in a broader perspective, birth occurs because of the endless process of becoming [...]”.<sup>4</sup> He states that “even at the time of death the process does not stop: the body continues decaying, disintegrating, while the consciousness becomes connected with another material structure, and continues flowing, becoming.”<sup>5</sup> Thus consciousness as a person’s karmic trajectory that is more subtle than the physical body continues after the death of the body. He goes on to describe the process of rebirth by discussing the 12 links of dependent origination.<sup>6</sup> Goenka therefore defines suffering not only as physical and emotional pain, and existential angst, but also as the process of rebirth itself. In an article co-authored by Goenka from the Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) entitled “*Vedanā in Paticcasamuppāda*” the authors state, “as long as this chain of twelve causal relations operates, the wheel of becoming (*bhava-cakka*) keeps turning, bringing nothing but

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<sup>2</sup> Goenka, 41.

<sup>3</sup> Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, 1846.

<sup>4</sup> Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*, 41.

<sup>5</sup> Goenka, 41.

<sup>6</sup> Goenka, 42-43.

suffering.”<sup>7</sup> This view of suffering as rebirth via the 12 links is in keeping with the Buddha’s teachings on the 12 links as suffering in the *nidanasmayutta* of the *Nidanavagga* in the *Samyutta Nikaya*. In the first discourse of the *nidanasmayutta* entitled “Links Discourse” (SN 12:1) the Buddha describes rebirth as the process of the 12 links and then states, “such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering”.<sup>8</sup>

To summarize, GV defines suffering on two levels. There is the inevitable suffering that comes with being born, and then there is the deeper suffering of rebirth that perpetuates the process of consciousness being born over and over again. A human being is seen as the coming together of the flow of ancestors via the “physical union of parents” and the karmic flow of consciousness from past lives via the links of dependent origination. This view of suffering is the product of the early Buddhist yogic mode of knowledge production in which the yogic practice of the Buddha was able to reveal the mechanics of rebirth.

The polyvagal theory was developed by Porges in collaboration with Levine and his development of SE.<sup>9</sup> It maps three systems of vagal nerves connected to three regions of the brain that regulate three different instinctual drives in humans. These three systems in humans are seen as the inherited legacy of three phylogenetic stages of biological evolution from the non-human genetic ancestors of humans. Levine states that the “most primitive of these three systems, the dorsal-vagal system” originated from early fish species “about 600 million years ago.”<sup>10</sup> He states that the function of this system is “immobilization, metabolic conservation, and overall shutdown.”<sup>11</sup> The vagal nerves of this dorsal-vagal system connect the most primitive

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<sup>7</sup> Khin and Goenka, *Sayagyi U Ba Khin Journal*, 272.

<sup>8</sup> Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, 533.

<sup>9</sup> Peter A. Levine, “Polyvagal Theory and Trauma,” in *The Polyvagal Theory: The Emergence of Polyvagal-Informed Therapies* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2018), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Levine, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Levine, 14.

part of the brain with the internal visceral organs. Levine states that the second vagal system is the “sympathetic nervous system” that evolved from reptiles “about 400 million years ago” and that its function is “mobilization and enhanced action (as in fight or flight).”<sup>12</sup> The vagal nerves of this system connect the region of the brain that governs fight or flight with the limbs of the body. Levine states that the third system is the “ventral branch of the parasympathetic nervous system, the so-called mammalian or smart vagus nerve.”<sup>13</sup> He states that this system originated from mammals “about 200 million years ago” and that “this neural subsystem shows its greatest refinement in primates, where it mediates complex social and attachment behaviors.”<sup>14</sup> The vagal nerves of this system connect the region of the brain that governs social engagement with “the cranial nerves that mediate acoustic tuning, vocalization, and facial expression.”<sup>15</sup>

Based on the polyvagal theory, Levine states that the symptoms of trauma in humans are the result of the immobility response of the dorsal vagal system not being able to complete itself after it has been engaged in the face of a perceived inescapable threat. In *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* Levine illustrates how animals naturally complete their immobility response after a life threat by telling the story of an impala in Africa that survives being hunted down by a cheetah and dragged to its feeding area.

A herd of impala grazes peacefully in a lush wadi. Suddenly, the wind shifts, carrying with it a new, but familiar scent. The impala sense danger in the air and become instantly tensed to a hair trigger of alertness. They sniff, look, and listen carefully for a few moments, but when no threat appears, the animals return to their grazing, relaxed yet vigilant.

Seizing the moment, a stalking cheetah leaps from its cover of dense shrubbery. As if it were one organism, the herd springs quickly toward a protective thicket at the wadi’s edge. One young impala trips for a split second, then recovers. But it is too late. In a blur, the cheetah lunges toward its intended victim, and the chase is on at a blazing sixty to seventy miles an hour.

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<sup>12</sup> Levine, P.14.

<sup>13</sup> Levine, P.14.

<sup>14</sup> Levine, P.14.

<sup>15</sup> Levine, 14.

At the moment of contact (or just before), the young impala falls to the ground, surrendering to its impending death. Yet, it may be uninjured. The stone-still animal is not pretending to be dead. It has instinctively entered an altered state of consciousness shared by all mammals when death appears imminent. Many indigenous peoples view this phenomenon as a surrender of the spirit of the prey to the predator, which, in a manner of speaking, it is.

Physiologists call this altered state the “immobility” or “freezing” response. It is one of the three primary responses available to reptiles and mammals when faced with an overwhelming threat. The other two, fight and flight, are much more familiar to most of us. Less is known about the immobility response. However, my work over the last twenty-five years has led me to believe that it is the single most important factor in uncovering the mystery of trauma.<sup>16</sup>

According to Levine, going into immobility serves two possible functions for an animal. One is that by playing opossum, i.e., *death feigning*, the predator will think the prey is already dead and so not kill the prey right away. This gives the prey a chance to later come out of the immobility response back into the fight or flight response and escape. A second function of the immobility response is that if the predator does kill the prey, the prey animal will not feel as much pain because his or her waking consciousness has dissociated from the body and the nervous system has shut down to basic life support. With regard to the first function, Levine states that a predator may drag its prey to a more protected space to feed, or back to its lair to feed its offspring. If the predator is distracted when the prey comes out of the immobility response it can flee. According to Levine, “when it is out of danger, the animal will literally shake off the residual effects of the immobility response and gain full control of its body.”<sup>17</sup> Because the impala went into the immobility response from the flight response, all of the intense energy of the flight response got stored or frozen in the body when it went into the immobility response. When the animal reaches safety, all that stored up energy still needs to be released. The animal does this by allowing its body to shake.

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<sup>16</sup> Levine, *Waking the Tiger*, 15.

<sup>17</sup> Levine, 16.

According to Levine, humans have difficulty allowing the immobility response to complete itself after a life threat because they are overwhelmed by the intense sensations and emotions that are involved with the completion process. The death feigning sensations of the immobility response can make a person feel like they are going to die and therefore trigger intense fear. The intense physical sensations of the fight and flight responses can bring up intense rage and fear that are overwhelming. Levine posits that instead of being with sensations and allowing the immobility response to complete, humans are overwhelmed by the sensations and carried away by the reactive emotions they bring up. This blocks the immobility response from completing. The nervous system is left in an unbalanced state which results in the posttraumatic symptoms of hyperarousal, hypo-arousal, and or dissociation.

To summarize, SE sees a human being as a manifestation of the continuing process of biological evolution. A human is born as the result of the physical union of his/her/their parents. A human has inherited three vagal nerve systems from his/her/their non-human ancestors, namely the dorsal vagal system, the sympathetic nervous system, and the ventral branch of the parasympathetic nervous system. These systems regulate a multitude of functions in the human body and mind but in terms of instinctual response to threat, the dorsal vagal system regulates the immobility response, the sympathetic nervous system regulates fight or flight, and the ventral branch of the parasympathetic nervous system regulates social engagement. As will be discussed below, SE uses the social engagement system in therapy to prevent the immobility and fight or flight responses from becoming too activated so that trauma can be metabolized. SE sees humans as a manifestation of the flow of evolutionary biology. Trauma is seen as a disruption to that flow. SE is meant to bring the nervous system of traumatized human beings back to balance so

that they can continue on in the flow of evolution at an optimal state. This view of humans and of trauma is the result of the modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production.

### **The Goenka Vipassana Understanding of the Cause and Cessation of Suffering Compared to the Understanding of the Cause and Cessation of Trauma in Somatic Experiencing**

The GV understanding of the Second and Third Noble Truths is by in large in accord with the early Buddhist yogic understanding put forward in the *Samyutta Nikaya*. A summary of that understanding in the *Samyutta Nikaya* will be presented here first, followed by the GV articulation of it.

#### **The Early Buddhist Yogic Understanding of the Second and Third Noble Truths**

When the Buddha teaches what the Second Noble Truth is in the Discourse on Rolling Forth the Wheel of Dhamma (SN 56:11), he states that craving (*tanha*) is the cause of suffering and that it should be abandoned.<sup>18</sup> When he teaches what the Third Noble Truth is, he states that it is the cessation (*nirodha*) of craving and that that cessation should be realized.<sup>19</sup> The Second and Third Noble Truths can be seen as his most boiled down presentation of his teachings on the links of dependent origination. Within the links craving arises from physical sensation. As discussed in the literature review chapter, the Buddha taught about two tracks of links in the 12 links. The track of the sense bases (*salayatana*) gives rise to contact (*phassa*) which gives rise to sensation (*vedana*) which gives rise to craving (*tanha*).<sup>20</sup> Aversion (*dosa*) is the craving to get rid of something so this track can be said to give rise to both craving and aversion. The other track, the track of ignorance (*avijja*), gives rise to volition (*sankhara*) which gives rise to consciousness

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<sup>18</sup> Bodhi, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, 1845.

<sup>19</sup> Bodhi, 1845.

<sup>20</sup> Bodhi, 580-581.

(*vinnana*) which gives rise to name-and-form (*nama-rupa*).<sup>21</sup> This second track can be seen as consciousness identifying with and attaching to the body and mind as self. Thus, taken all together, the teachings on the links of dependent origination state that ignorance, craving, and aversion are the cause of suffering, i.e., the Second Noble Truth.

The early Buddhist yogic discourses on the underlying tendencies (*anusaya*) and the ten fetters (*samyojana*) and in the Path Chapter (*maggasamyutta*) of the *Samyutta Nikaya* provide an even more detailed definition of what the Buddha taught as the Second Noble Truth. In the “Underlying Tendencies Discourse” (SN 45:175) the Buddha lists the underlying tendencies that cause rebirth as sensual lust, aversion, views, doubts, conceit, lust for existence, and ignorance.<sup>22</sup> In the “Lower Fetters Discourse” (SN 45:179) the Buddha lists identity view, doubt, distorted grasp of rules and vows, sensual craving, and ill will as five lower fetters.<sup>23</sup> In the “Higher Fetters Discourse” (SN 45:180) he lists lust for form, lust for the formless, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance as the five higher fetters.<sup>24</sup> The lower fetters get their name from the fact that sensual craving and ill will cause rebirth in the desire realm of humans, animals, and other lower realms of beings. The higher fetters get their name because they cause rebirth in the more subtle spiritual world of the form realm and the even subtler spiritual world of the formless realm.

The teachings on the four fruits of attainment describe the early Buddhist yogic stages of spiritual realization when a person experiences *nibbana* and, as a result, one or more of the ten fetters are weakened or destroyed, i.e., go into cessation. In the “The Ending of Defilements Discourse” (SN 54:20) in the mindfulness of breathing chapter (*anapanasamyutta*) of the Great Book (*Mahavagga*), the Buddha states that the 16 exercises of mindfulness of breathing “leads to

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<sup>21</sup> Bodhi, 576-577.

<sup>22</sup> Bodhi, 1564.

<sup>23</sup> Bodhi, 1565.

<sup>24</sup> Bodhi, 1565.

the abandoning of the fetters, to the uprooting of the underlying tendencies, to the full understanding of the course, to the destruction of the taints.”<sup>25</sup> Exercises 15 and 16 are the contemplation of cessation (*nirodha*) and the contemplation of relinquishment (*paṭinissagga*) respectively. Cessation means an experience of *nibbana*. Relinquishment means the weakening or destruction of one or more of the ten fetters as a result. In the “In the Brick Hall Discourse” (SN 55:8) from the Stream Entry Chapter (*sotāpatisamyutta*) of the *Mahavagga*, one of the Buddha’s senior monks, Ananda, asks where a certain monk, nun, layman, and laywoman will be reborn. The Buddha responds by describing the four levels of attainment.

Ananda, the bhikkhu Salha who has died, by the destruction of the taints, in this very life had entered and dwelt in the taintless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, realizing it for himself with direct knowledge. The bhikkhuni Nanda who has died had, with the utter destruction of the five lower fetters, become one of spontaneous birth, due to attain Nibbana there without returning from that world. The male lay follower Sudatta who has died, with the utter destruction of the three fetters and with the diminishing of greed, hatred, and delusion, become a once-returner, who after coming back to this world only one more time, will make an end to suffering. The female lay follower Sujata who has died had, with the utter destruction of three fetters, become a stream-enterer, no longer bound to the nether world, fixed in destiny, with enlightenment as her destination.<sup>26</sup>

The bhikkhu Salha had destroyed all of the ten fetters and became an *arahat* (one who is worthy) who had put an end to rebirth. The bhikkhuni Nanda had destroyed the five lower fetters and became a non-returner (*anāgāmi*) who would be reborn in a spirit world where she would there attain *nibbana*. The layman Sudatta had destroyed the first three of the lower fetters and weakened sensual craving and ill will and so became a “once-returner” (*sakadāgāmī*) who would be reborn as a human one more time before fully realizing *nibbana*. The laywoman Sujata had destroyed the first three fetters and became a stream-enterer (*sotāpatti*) who would not be reborn in the lower realms of rebirth, i.e., realms lower than a human, anymore. The neatness of the

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<sup>25</sup> Bodhi, 1786-1787.

<sup>26</sup> Bodhi, 1800.

presentation of the four fruits in this discourse which alternates between a monk, a nun, a layman, and a laywoman makes it hard to believe that it is an historical record of these four particular people reaching attainment. However, the discourse can be seen as an early Buddhist yogic presentation of what the four fruits are. In addition, it demonstrates that lay people can also practice the Eightfold Path and reach attainment, and that both women and men can reach attainment. The “Nuns Chapter” (*bhikkhunisamyutta*) of the *Samyutta Nikaya* has numerous discourses in which nuns are depicted as having become *arahats*.<sup>27</sup> The early Buddhist yogic view that anyone can become an *arahat* is in stark contrast to the Christian scholastic teaching that no one can reach the same level of spiritual awakening as Jesus, or to the modern scientific scholastic view that denies the possibility of rebirth and liberation from rebirth.

### **The Goenka Vipassana Articulation of the Second and Third Noble Truths**

In the “Day Five Discourse” of *Discourse Summaries* Goenka teaches that craving is the cause of suffering because it is at the links of sensation and craving that one can break the chain of the 12 links. He teaches that contact between the sense bases and sense objects has already happened and as a result sensation has already arisen so there is nothing a person can do about that. Once a person has acted on craving, i.e., grasping (*upadana*), the karmic arrow has left the bow resulting in becoming and cannot be called back. But Goenka states that “here, at the link of sensation, one can break the chain.”<sup>28</sup> If the practitioner can be aware of sensation and have equanimity towards sensation, then when an unwholesome mental formation (*akusala sankhara*) of craving or aversion arises the practitioner can be aware of it, abandon it, and return awareness back to sensation. Goenka teaches that if one can abandon the new *sankharas* that arise from

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<sup>27</sup> Bodhi, 221-30.

<sup>28</sup> Goenka, *Discourse Summaries*, 43.

sensation in the present, then older deeper *sankharas* from the past can come up and be released.

According to Goenka,

Any moment in which one does not generate a new *sankhara*, one of the old ones will arise on the surface of the mind, and along with it a sensation will start within the body. If one remains equanimous, it passes away and another old reaction arises in its place. One continues to remain equanimous to physical sensations and the old *sankhara[s]* continue to arise and pass away, one after another. If out of ignorance one reacts to sensations, then one multiplies the *sankhara[s]*, multiplies one's misery. But if one develops wisdom and does not react to sensations, then one after another the *sankhara[s]* are eradicated, misery is eradicated.<sup>29</sup>

To summarize, even though craving is just one of the 12 links, GV teaches that it is the functional cause of suffering because it is at the links of sensation and craving where one has agency and can break out of the chain. Craving is categorized as an intention/emotion (*sankhara*) and as a “reaction” to sensation. There are present reactive intentions/emotions related to present sensations and there are stored up old reactive intention/emotions that co-arise with sensation in the body. This can be seen as an implicit memory from the past—i.e., a memory without an explicit narrative—that is made up of sensation and intention/emotion. Through awareness of body sensation, one is able to get in touch with and release the stored reactive intentions/emotions from the past. The glossary in *Discourse Summaries* refers to these stored reactive *sankharas* as “Kilesa mental defilements, negativity, mental impurity. *Anusaya kilesa*, latent defilement, impurity lying dormant in the unconscious.”<sup>30</sup>

The goal of GV practice is to become aware of the body as a vibrational field of sensation arising and passing—known as *bhanga*—and then to allow all of the deepest *sankharas* that cause rebirth to arise as sensation and reactive intention/emotion in order to release them. This is called *sankharaupekkha* (equanimity towards reactive intention/emotion). The key is to be aware

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<sup>29</sup> Goenka, 43.

<sup>30</sup> Goenka, 115.

of sensation, to be able to distinguish between sensation and intention/emotion, and to stay with sensation in order to allow the reactive intention/emotion to be organically released. GV recognizes the four fruits of attainment as thresholds of experiencing *nibbana* and releasing the *sankharas* that cause rebirth.<sup>31</sup> GV differs from the early Buddhist yogic texts on *satipatthana* because it does not use the 16 exercises of mindfulness of breathing as its narrative for *satipatthana* practice. It therefore does not talk about being aware of the heart-mind and liberating the heart-mind as taught in exercises nine through 12. However, Goenka teaches that when a person experiences their body as a vibrational field of tiny wavelets or particles arising and passing, this naturally leads to the person's consciousness letting go of identifying with and attaching to the body and mind as self, i.e., liberating the heart-mind.<sup>32</sup> Thus, even though GV uses the later Buddhist scholastic framework of Buddhaghosa to present GV as a path of dry insight, because it focuses on body sensations in the context of the links of dependent origination, it is mostly in accord with the early Buddhist yogic teachings from the *Samyutta Nikaya*.

### **The Somatic Experiencing Understanding of the Cause and Cessation of Trauma**

Similar to GV, SE posits that the functional cause of trauma is a person being overwhelmed by intense body sensations and reactive emotions. Similar to GV, SE posits that the key to being able to release trauma from the body is to be able to distinguish between sensation and reactive intention/emotion, to cultivate awareness of and equanimity towards sensation, and to let go of identifying with and acting on reactive intention/emotion. Similar to GV, SE posits that this results in an organic release or unwinding of past unmetabolized

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<sup>31</sup> Goenka, see glossary entry "Ariya," 112.

<sup>32</sup> Goenka, 27-28.

traumatizing experience and the cessation of traumatic symptoms. According to Levine trauma is caused by the coupling of the sensations of the immobility response with fear and other strong reactive emotions. He posits that the cessation of trauma occurs when the sensations of immobility can be uncoupled from fear and other reactive emotions. In *In An Unspoken Voice* Levine states,

I believe that it is only when the immobility becomes inextricably and simultaneously coupled with intense fear and other strong negative emotions that we get the entrenched feedback loop in the form of persistent posttraumatic stress disorder. My experience [...] has taught me that the very key to resolving trauma is being able to *uncouple and separate the fear from the immobility*.<sup>33</sup>

Levine argues that the “state of immobility is not in and of itself traumatic.” In other words, it is not just when there is a perceived inescapable life threat that one can engage the immobility drive. He gives examples of humans being put in immobility through hypnosis, how mammal youth go into immobility when carried by their mothers in their jaws, and how females from several mammal species, including humans, go into immobility during orgasm.<sup>34</sup> Levine sees the separation of immobility sensation from reactive negative emotion as the core of SE theory and practice. According to Levine,

*This difference [in the different reasons animals go into immobility] suggests a clear rationale for a trauma therapy model that separates fear and other strong negative affects from the (normally time-limited) biological immobility response. Separating the two components breaks the feedback loop that rekindles the trauma response. This, I am convinced, is the philosopher’s stone of informed trauma therapy.*<sup>35</sup>

According to SE theory, when a person has survived a traumatizing event, the body naturally wants to complete the immobility cycle. But when it tries to do so, the person becomes overwhelmed by the intense sensations and reactive emotions that arise from the immobility

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<sup>33</sup> Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice*, 56.

<sup>34</sup> Levine, 57-58.

<sup>35</sup> Levine, 58.

response. The sensations can make a person can feel like they are going to die because immobility is used to feign death during a threat. Because one enters immobility from fight or flight when under inescapable threat, a person can also feel fight or flight sensations, fear and or rage.

The goal of SE is to use awareness of body sensations and interpersonal contact to channel a person's instinctual drives towards the renegotiation and metabolization of trauma. Levine distinguishes between the *renegotiation* of trauma and the *reenactment* of trauma. Renegotiation is the experience of being with sensations and emotions in a way that feels safe and allows for the immobility response to unwind. Reenactment is the experience of being overwhelmed by sensation and reactive intention/emotion which leads to acting out on that reactive intention/emotion. In *Waking the Tiger...* Levine defines reenactment in humanistic terms as "underlying and unconscious patterns of events and beliefs that seemingly have their own power to create our experiences according to their dictates." He defines re-enactment in more biological terms by stating, "re-enactment represents the organism's attempt to complete the natural cycle of activation and deactivation that accompanies the response to a threat in the wild." Levine describes the process of renegotiation as the ability, "to *slow down* and experience all the elements of sensation and feeling that accompany our traumatic patterns, allowing them to complete themselves before we move on, we begin to access and transform the drives and motivations that otherwise compel us to re-enact traumatic events."<sup>36</sup> When the immobility response is allowed to complete, this results in the cessation of traumatic symptoms.

GV teaches that the cause of suffering in humans is the repeating cycle of the links of dependent origination causing humans to be overwhelmed by sensations and then to act out on

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<sup>36</sup> Levine, *Waking the Tiger*, 187.

the reactive intentions/emotions that arise from those sensations. It teaches that the cessation of suffering is the breaking out of the cycle of the links by cultivating awareness of and equanimity towards body sensation in order to abandon or let go of the deeply rooted reactive intentions/emotions that cause rebirth. SE teaches that trauma is caused by being stuck in a feedback loop in which a person is overwhelmed by the sensations and emotions of the immobility response trying to complete itself which results in the reenactment of trauma. It teaches that by cultivating awareness of and equanimity towards body sensation, a person can be with the sensations of the immobility response and allow it to complete itself instead of acting out on the strong reactive emotions that arise from the sensations of immobility. This results in the cessation of PTSD.

### **The Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering in Goenka Vipassana Compared to the Path Leading to the Cessation of Trauma in Somatic Experiencing**

A standard way of summarizing the Fourth Noble Truth, i.e., the Eightfold Path, is the threefold training (*tisikkhā*) of precepts (*sila*), concentration (*samadhi*), and insight or wisdom (*paññā*). A standard way of summarizing the path of recovery from trauma is Herman's three-stage approach of establishing safety, remembering and mourning, and reconnecting to social bonds.<sup>37</sup> At the beginning of a GV meditation retreat the practitioners commit to keeping the five precepts of not: killing, stealing, engaging in sexual misconduct, using false or harmful speech, or taking intoxicants. During the retreat the third precept means celibacy. Between retreats the third precept means not committing adultery or sexual abuse. The general idea is that if a person is keeping the five precepts, then they are not acting out on craving or aversion. This forms the

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<sup>37</sup> Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, chap. 7-10.

foundation of meditation practice which is focused on abandoning internal behavior of craving and aversion. In trauma therapy, establishing safety means supporting the client to be in a safe daily life situation in which he/she/they is not exposed to further traumatizing events and is not acting out on destructive intentions/emotions. Like with the precepts in GV, this forms the foundation of trauma therapy which is focused on internal work.

Once a GV practitioner has committed to keeping the five precepts on the first day of a retreat they then engage in the practice of mindfulness of breathing at the nose. This is the GV version of concentration practice (*samatha bhavana*). By focusing on the neutral to pleasant sensation of breath at the tip of the nose and upper lip the practitioner calms and stabilizes the body and mind. Each time the mind wanders from the breath the practitioner brings it back. After three days of this practice the practitioner usually reaches a state of access concentration in which their mind is not wandering, they feel relaxed yet alert, and they are aware of subtle body sensation at the tip of the nose and upper lip. As will be discussed below, from day four to day nine the main practice is the bodyscan practice. But the practitioner is taught to return to mindfulness of breathing at the nose if their concentration becomes dull or if they are overwhelmed by sensation and or emotion and need to restabilize the body and mind. Thus, mindfulness or breathing serves as a home base for GV practice.

In SE, as part of trauma therapy, in addition to working with the client to ensure relative safety and stability in their daily life, the therapist works with the client to be in touch with neutral to pleasant body sensations. This is to establish stability of body and mind. One of the main ways this is done is through social engagement and attunement between the therapist and client. As discussed above, the social engagement system is one of the three vagal nerve systems in the body. Through a moderate amount of eye contact, smiling, the use of a soothing gentle

tone of voice, and through physical attunement through mirroring body posture, the therapist supports the client to activate his/her/their social engagement drive. This has the effect of creating a feeling of safety and stability in the client and of generating neutral to pleasant body sensations in the client.

The other SE practice to establish stability is for the therapist to direct the client's attention to neutral to pleasant sensations in the body. The therapist may ask the client to notice comfortable sensations arising from the contact with their body and the chair. Or pleasant sensations in the body arising from pleasing sensory experience in the environment. Or the therapist may ask the client to directly notice where in the body the client feels neutral to pleasant sensations. By focusing on those sensations, the client can relax and feel safe. The combination of social engagement and noticing neutral to pleasant sensations is known as "resourcing" in SE.<sup>38</sup> Resourcing is used to establish stability. If the client becomes activated during a session resourcing is used to re-establish stability. Like mindfulness of breathing in GV, resourcing in SE serves as a home base for practice.

In a standard 10-day GV course, days four through nine are mainly spent doing the bodyscan practice. As discussed above, the goal of GV is to cultivate awareness of and equanimity towards body sensation and to allow stored reactive intentions/emotions (*sankharas*) to come up and be released. This is what GV considers to be insight meditation, i.e., "*vipassana* meditation" proper. Because the practitioner has already spent the first three days focusing on the sensation of the breath at the tip of the nose and upper lip, he/she/they has already become sensitized to body sensation at a subtle level of awareness. With the bodyscan practice, the practitioner moves their sensitized awareness through every part of the body in order to

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<sup>38</sup> Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau, "Somatic Experiencing," 8.

experience all of the sensations that are happening in the body. Based on my experience of having sat two standard 10-day GV courses, the practitioner is first led through a guided bodyscan meditation starting at the top of the head and working down the body to the toes. The pace is slow taking about 30 minutes to complete one full scan. The practitioner is asked to focus on the surface of the body where it is easier to notice sensation. As the days progress there are different guided bodyscans offered in which the sequence of parts varies somewhat as well as the pace of the scan. The practitioner is also invited to become aware of sensations deeper within the body. There are also practice sessions in which the practitioner is encouraged to engage in self-guided practice.

The practitioners are taught to notice if the sensations are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. They are taught to notice if craving arises from pleasant sensations, aversion from unpleasant sensations, and ignorance or lack of awareness of sensation from neutral sensations. If a reactive intention/emotion arises from sensation, the practitioner is taught to notice the intention/emotion and then return back to sensation. Practitioners are also taught to notice the quality of sensation in terms of the four elements. For example, the spectrum of hardness to softness is the earth element, the spectrum of heat to cold is the fire element, the spectrum of movement to stillness is the air element, and the spectrum of connected fluidity between parts vs disconnected non-fluidity is the water element. By systematically scanning the body the practitioner is bound to pass through a variety of pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral sensations. In addition, by only staying with a sensation for a brief period of time before moving on to the next one the practitioner avoids developing craving for pleasant sensations and aversion towards unpleasant sensations. Another benefit of the systematic scan is that the entire body is scanned instead of just certain parts.

A common progression that a practitioner goes through during a 10 day retreat is to first only feel gross dense sensations in the body. As time goes by the gross sensations can dissolve into more subtle sensations. Another common progression is for there to be fairly intense painful sensations in the beginning and then later fairly strong pleasant sensations. As discussed above, at an advanced stage of practice called *bhanga*, the experience of the body can dissolve into a field of energy or vibrations rapidly arising and passing away. In this stage deep *sankharas* of identification and attachment to the body and mind as self can arise and be released. Another common experience is for an intense emotional reaction to arise from a sensation. Goenka calls these “sleeping volcanoes.” The practice is to notice the reaction and return to sensation allowing the reaction to subside on its own. The practitioner can also return to mindfulness of breathing at the nose to restore equanimity.

The technique of SE tends to just focus on the first two of Herman’s three stages of recovery from trauma, namely establishing safety and remembering and mourning. Since SE works with body sensation primarily, explicit memories of trauma as narratives are not the main focus.<sup>39</sup> Thus, instead of remembering and mourning, the practice is more about getting in touch with sensation and metabolizing stored material. To the extent that working with explicit memories helps with the metabolizing of trauma they are engaged with. But Levine posits that a person does not necessarily have to remember explicit narratives to metabolize trauma and that the actual work of metabolization is done through sensation.<sup>40</sup> To the extent that bringing up explicit memories is retriggering or overwhelming for the client, SE downplays working with them.<sup>41</sup> The therapist may ask the client to talk about events of the day that a traumatic incident

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<sup>39</sup> Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice*, 297.

<sup>40</sup> Levine, 184.

<sup>41</sup> Levine, 184.

happened stopping right when a small amount of activation occurs and then switch to strategically working with sensation. Thus, SE can be said to focus on two stages, namely establishing stability and metabolizing trauma. As discussed above, establishing stability is accomplished through social engagement and resourcing. Metabolizing trauma is accomplished through pendulation and titration with discussion of narrative as a supporting function.

In pendulation the SE therapist guides the client in alternating between pleasant and unpleasant sensations. Unpleasant sensations are engaged with in small doses, i.e., titration. Pendulation is done temporally by inviting the client to talk about neutral or pleasant events that occurred before or after a traumatizing event and then slowly moving towards the event until a manageable amount of material is activated. Then that material is worked with as sensation followed by returning to a temporally more distant time from the traumatizing event. Pendulation is done physically by inviting the client to start at a place in the body where sensations are neutral to pleasant and are distant from the region of the body where there are unpleasant sensations. The therapist guides the client in focusing on the distant neutral to pleasant sensations and then gradually moving towards the region where there are unpleasant sensations. When the practitioner reaches the point where he/she/they experiences a manageable amount of unpleasant sensations he/she/they is asked to stay with that sensation and allow for the body to organically process that sensation. Then the practitioner is asked to move awareness back to the region of the body where there are neutral to pleasant sensations. Levine posits that a person's body and nervous system has a natural rhythm of establishing stability, bringing up activated material, and then metabolizing that material. SE merely supports and reinforces that natural rhythm through social engagement and through the skillful focus of awareness on body sensation.

## Conclusion: An Integrated Map of GV and SE Theory and Practice

In the co-authored journal article by Payne et al on SE discussed in the chapter one, Levine and his co-authors speak of trauma as manifesting on a spectrum of intensity. The article states that there appears to be a “continuum of stress conditions; a chronic but mild elevation of sympathetic response at one end, and chronic extreme activation of both sympathetic and parasympathetic (or more exactly, ergotropic and trophotropic) systems at the other.”<sup>42</sup> As also discussed in chapter one, in common trauma therapy parlance trauma is often referred to as “big T” and “little t” trauma.<sup>43</sup> Within SE this spectrum is measured by the intensity of body sensations and reactive emotions, and the level of dysregulation this causes within the nervous system. One could say that a map of trauma that is the most nuanced would measure small, medium, and big T trauma. Big T trauma would be PTSD as understood in the *Diagnostic and Statistics Manual (DSM)* of the American Psychiatric Association. Small and medium t trauma would not count as PTSD in the DSM, but it would still manifest as a certain level of intense body sensation and reactive emotion and a certain level of dysregulation in the nervous system.

Since this map of trauma is based on a biological and psychological view of human beings as a flow of evolutionary biology, it does not recognize the karmic flow of rebirth and the possibility of liberation from rebirth. Therefore, the ten fetters as the deeply rooted habit energies (*sankharas*) that cause rebirth would not be fully revealed in this map of small, medium, and big T trauma. For that to be possible the map would have to include the karmic flow via the links of dependent origination within the context of the Four Noble Truths. An integrated map (see Figure Three below) would include small, medium, and big T trauma that could be recognized

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<sup>42</sup> Payne, Levine, and Crane-Godreau, “Somatic Experiencing,” 5.

<sup>43</sup> Miller-Karas, *Building Resilience to Trauma*, 2.

and measured with the polyvagal theory and deep t trauma that could be recognized and measured with the links of dependent origination and the ten fetters.

Small t trauma	small intensity of overwhelming sensation and reactive intention/emotion	small dysregulation of nervous system	metabolization of small t trauma
Medium t trauma	medium intensity of overwhelming sensation and reactive intention/emotion	medium dysregulation of nervous system	metabolization of medium t trauma
Big T trauma	big intensity of overwhelming sensation and reactive intention/emotion	big dysregulation of nervous system	metabolization of big T trauma
Deep t trauma	deep and subtle intensity of overwhelming sensation and reactive intention/emotion	the ten fetters causing rebirth	metabolization of ten fetters

Figure 3: Integrated Map of Small, Medium, Big, and Deep t trauma

As the discussion above revealed, both GV and SE speak of a person being caught up in a repeating cycle of overwhelming sensation and reactive intention/emotion that leads to acting out in ways that cause suffering and trauma respectively. Both speak of the necessity of separating sensation from reactive intention/emotion to break out of that cycle. Both speak of a path of practice that involves cultivating awareness of and equanimity towards sensation in order to be able to let go of reactive sensation/emotion. Both speak of this practice resulting in the releasing or organic unwinding of stored material. Since this mutual critical correlation of GV and SE theory and practice is intended primarily for Buddhist ministers to practice Buddhist counseling, and since the Buddhist map of the links can include the polyvagal theory and all levels of trauma whereas the reverse is not true, I will now briefly articulate an integrated theory and practice using the Buddhist terminology.

Human beings are a manifestation of their karmic flow of becoming conjoined with their genetic flow of biological evolution. A person's body and mind are constantly going through a

repeating cycle of sensory contact (*phassa*), sensation (*vedana*), intention/emotion (*sankhara*), action (*kamma*), and becoming (*bhava*), i.e., embodied result. A person can be traumatized if they are overwhelmed by an experience that leaves a residue of unmetabolized sensation and reactive intention/emotion. Through the practice of mindfulness of breathing and body sensation, that residue of unmetabolized experience can be metabolized through the practice of being with sensation and letting go of reactive intention/emotion. To make this practice easier and more effective, it can be done in the context of Buddhist counseling where a Buddhist minister supports a counselee in the practices of keeping the five precepts, mindfulness of breathing, and mindfulness of body sensations.

At the deepest level, the process of rebirth itself is the result of unmetabolized deep habit energies known as the ten fetters. These deep level habit energies can be brought up and released through the practice of deep meditation. This process is traditionally understood to take multiple lifetimes and at the highest level requires keeping renunciant precepts in order to uproot the ten fetters and realize *nibbana*. An understanding of the polyvagal theory and of the theory and practice of SE can greatly enhance this process as it provides a detailed understanding of the instinctual drives of social engagement, fight or flight, and immobility, and how to skillfully work with those drives in the context of counseling sessions. Engaging in counseling first to metabolize stored habit energies can help a person metabolize small, medium, and big T trauma before engaging in intensive meditation practice to work on deep t trauma. It can prevent using meditation to spiritually bypass small, medium, and big T trauma. However, if a person just worked on small, medium, and big T trauma in counseling they run the risk of *materially bypassing* deep t trauma, i.e., the ten fetters, and missing out on the chance to realize *nibbana*. It is therefore important for Buddhist counseling and Buddhist meditation to be part of a collective

ecosystem of laypeople and monastics all striving to recover from small, medium, big, and deep trauma together.

### *Chapter Five: Themes from Interviews with O.I. Participants*

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first gives background information on the six OI participants who were interviewed in terms of general demographics, what being an O.I. member entails, their Buddhist background, and their psychotherapeutic background in relation to trauma therapy. The first section concludes with the interview questions. The second, and main section of this chapter, discusses the primary themes that emerged from the interviews.

#### **Background of Interviewees**

The table below (Figure 4) provides some demographic information about all six participants in this study. As can be seen, four identified as female, two as male. All identified as white, three also identified as Jewish. Five identified as straight and one said she was attracted to members of the same sex. All six of them have graduate degrees in psychology or social work. Two of them share depth psychology as a therapeutic orientation, one uses a Rogerian person-centered approach, and three stated that they use a combination of Buddhist mindfulness and interpersonal neurobiology as their therapeutic orientation. All six of them are members of the OI. Three are lay Dharma teachers.

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Race/ Ethnicity</b>	<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<b>Highest Degree</b>	<b>Therapeutic Orientation</b>	<b>OI Rank</b>
P1	F	White	Straight	Psy D	Psychoanalytic	Member
P2	M	W/Jewish	Straight	MS Psych	Person- Centered	Dharma Teacher
P3	F	W/Jewish	Lesbian	MS Psych	Buddhism & neuroscience	Dharma Teacher
P4	F	W/Jewish	Straight	MS Psych	Jungian	Dharma Teacher
P5	F	W	Straight	MSW	Buddhism & neuroscience	Member
P6	M	W	Straight	MS Psych	Buddhism & neuroscience	Member

Figure 4: Background of OI Participants

The standard process of training in the O.I. for lay practitioners is that a person first takes refuge in the Three Jewels—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha—and commits to keeping the five precepts in a ceremony performed by an O.I. Dharma teacher. Then they participate in a local Thich Nhat Hanh sangha (congregation) led by O.I. members. This is usually a group of people that meet weekly for meditation, Dharma discussion, tea meditation, and other Dharma activities. Usually, O.I. sanghas in the U.S. meet in the home of an O.I. member or rent out a space at a church or yoga studio. A local sangha usually ranges in size from eight people to around 40 people. Usually there is a core of two to four O.I. members who lead the sangha. A sangha meeting typically lasts 90 to 120 minutes. Practice usually includes one or two rounds of sitting meditation for 30 minutes, slow walking meditation, a short reading, and Dharma discussion. Once a person has gained experience over some years as a regular sangha member at a local sangha, and has also regularly participated in retreats at an O.I. monastery or residential O.I. community, they can request to become a member of the O.I. They then go through a mentoring process with an O.I. member or Dharma teacher for about two years. Once they pass

that process, they can become an OI member at an ordination ceremony that is usually held at one of the OI monasteries. After years of co-leading a sangha as an O.I. member and regularly attending retreats, a person's local sangha and other O.I. members can nominate a person to become a Dharma teacher. In addition to facilitating a local sangha, Dharma teachers lead retreats and workshops, and also are empowered to conduct the five precepts ceremony.

For the sake of anonymity, I will refer to the six participants as P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6. The following is more information about the participants as individuals in terms of their connection to the OI and their connection psychotherapy. P1's initial psychotherapy training was in Freudian psychoanalysis. She went on to study and train in attachment theory related to early childhood development as well as relational psychoanalysis. She became interested in Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings after having become a psychoanalyst. She went to Plum Village monastery in France for a multi-month retreat and later became an OI member. At first, she practiced mindfulness herself during therapy sessions, and then, over time, began teaching mindfulness to her patients as part of her treatment. A significant element of her work is the understanding of implicit and explicit memory in relation to trauma. In that regard she has drawn from the work of Dan Siegel and Peter Levine.<sup>1</sup>

P2 had a career initially as an electrical engineer. He became a psychotherapist as a second career. He tends to take a person-centered approach to therapy based on the work of Carl Rogers. He first became interested in Buddhism through Japanese Zen. But he left that tradition after a sex scandal with the teacher was revealed. After some time away from Buddhism he reconnected through Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings. He joined a local sangha and went to regular retreats at an OI monastery. Over time he became an OI member and then a Dharma teacher. In

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<sup>1</sup> Levine, *Waking the Tiger*; Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice*; Siegel, *Mindsight*.

terms of trauma therapy some of his main influences are Van der Kolk, Briere, Levine, Porges, Pat Ogden, Herman, and Robert Stolorow.<sup>2</sup>

P3 has worked as a therapist for many years. On the questionnaire she answered that her original degree and training was so long ago that she doesn't really remember what particular therapeutic orientation she learned and started out with. She describes her approach now as a combination of neuroscience, body-centered trauma therapy, and mindfulness. She has done training in Elaine Miller Karas' Trauma Resiliency Model (TRM) and Community Resiliency model (CRM), a somatic trauma therapy approach based on Levine's SE. She has also done training in EMDR. She cites Van der Kolk, Miller-Karas, Levine, and Francine Shapiro as her main sources for somatic trauma therapy theory and practice, in addition to neuroscience research in general on human development and trauma.<sup>3</sup> She became interested in Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings after having become a therapist. She joined a local sangha as well as attended retreats at OI monasteries. She then went on to become an O.I. member and then a Dharma teacher. She is part of a lay residential O.I. community. Her therapy work has transitioned to a significant degree to now teaching TRM and CRM workshops to groups instead of one-on-one therapy sessions.

P4 was originally a dancer and an artist. She became interested in Thich Nhat Hanh, started attending retreats, and joined a local sangha. She then went back to school to become a therapist. The therapeutic orientation of the school was Jungian depth psychology. She sees her Buddhist training with Thich Nhat Hanh as foundational to her work as a therapist, and that her

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<sup>2</sup> Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*; Ogden et al., *Trauma and the Body*; Briere and Scott, *Principles of Trauma Therapy*; Wikipedia, s.n., "Robert Stolorow," last modified May 1, 2020, 9:49, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Robert\\_Stolorow&oldid=954229590](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Robert_Stolorow&oldid=954229590); Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*; Levine, *Waking the Tiger*; Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice*; Porges, *The Pocket Guide to the Polyvagal Theory*.

<sup>3</sup> Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*; Miller-Karas, *Building Resilience to Trauma*; Levine, *Waking the Tiger*; Levine, *In an Unspoken Voice*; Shapiro, *Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy, Third Edition*.

psychotherapy training is a second layer of training on top of the Buddhist training. She has done trauma therapy training in EMDR, TRM, Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, and other training with Van der Kolk. In addition to Van der Kolk she draws from Levine and Laura Parnell in terms of overall trauma therapy theory and practice.<sup>4</sup> She became an OI member and then later became a Dharma teacher. She is one of the leaders of a local OI sangha.

P5 did her initial psychotherapy training in psychodynamic therapy and then CBT. Later she did training in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy and attachment focused therapy.<sup>5</sup> Her initial clinical work was with people recovering from brain and spine injuries and so has had a neurobiological focus from early on. She became interested in yoga and the teachings of Krishnamurti. She then did retreats in MBSR and Goenka Vipassana. She started going to retreats at OI monasteries and eventually became an O.I. member. She is also an MBSR teacher and a Mindful Self Compassion (MSC) teacher. She sees on average about 20 clients a week for therapy, teaches two to four MBSR classes a week, and is part of a local OI sangha. Her main understanding of trauma is based on Dan Siegel's work focused on implicit and explicit memory and integration of the brain. She also draws from Porges, Levine, Marsha Linehan, Diane Poole Heller, Mary Main and Erick Hesse.<sup>6</sup> As part of her focus on implicit memory she also includes attachment theory. Like P2 she describes her therapeutic approach as a combination of interpersonal neurobiology and mindfulness practice.

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<sup>4</sup> "Home," Laurel Parnell, Ph.D., accessed July 28, 2022, <https://drlaurelparnell.com/>.

<sup>5</sup> Marsha Linehan, *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1993); Kelly Koerner and Marsha M. Linehan, *Doing Dialectical Behavior Therapy: A Practical Guide* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Diane Poole Heller, "Diane Poole Heller, Ph.D.," *Trauma Solutions* (blog), last modified August 22, 2022, 2:59, <https://dianepooleheller.com/diane-poole-heller/>; Wikipedia, "Mary Main," [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mary\\_Main&oldid=1084434268](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Mary_Main&oldid=1084434268); "Erik D. Hesse | UC Psych," accessed July 28, 2022, <https://psychology.berkeley.edu/people/erik-d-hesse>.

P6 learned about Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings while an undergraduate. After college he did multiple multi-month retreats at O.I. monasteries and also engaged in social justice activism. He then later went back to school to earn a master's in psychology and became a therapist. He sees the work he does as a therapist as mainly being based on Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings. He is influenced by computational neuroscience which focuses on the models of reality that organisms generate in response to external stimuli. He also draws from parts-work therapy such as Internal Family Systems. He uses the neuroscience understanding of trauma and memory to help explain to people how their mind and body work and how trauma works. He says, however, that that what he is really doing behind that is teaching them about Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on Buddhism and meditation. He is an OI member and belongs to a lay residential OI congregation. A core element to his work is the practice of compassion which he integrates with an understanding of fundamental emotion from mammalian biology.

### **Research Questions**

The following are the research questions that I sent to each of the participants before the interview. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I either asked everyone these same questions or determined that a participant had already answered a question as part of their answer to another questions so I did not need to ask it.

- Using the language of your psychotherapy education, training, and practice, please speak about your understanding of what trauma is.
- Using the language of your Buddhist education, training, and practice, please speak about your understanding of what trauma is.
- Please speak about how your Buddhist education, training, and practice shows up when you are with a client working on trauma.
- Please speak about how your trauma therapy education, training, and practice shows up in your Buddhist practice, including your relationship with other sangha members?
- Based on your experience, how can Buddhist theory and practice improve the theory and practice of trauma therapy?

- Based on your experience, how can trauma therapy theory and practice improve the theory and practice of Buddhism?

## **Themes**

In the following section the themes that emerged from the questions are presented. First the question is provided. Then the themes that emerged from that question are presented. Then the next question is provided followed by the presentation of the themes that emerged for that next question.

### **Question One**

**Using the language of your psychotherapy education, training, and practice, please speak about your understanding of what trauma is.**

Five out of the six participants (P 1-5) described trauma as an overwhelming experience or series of experiences from the past that have not been metabolized by a person's body and mind. P6 had a slightly different take based on his work with clients with schizophrenia. Because those clients could create a fantasy of a "past event" that never "happened," but the "memory" of which was traumatizing in the present, he focused more on the client's process of interpretation in the present moment. In the following definition of trauma, P1 distinguishes between acute versus complex trauma.

P1: OK my understanding of trauma is twofold. One is an urgent and immediate blow to the balance and wellbeing of the psyche due to some major experience or happening that's immediate. And the other is chronic embedded trauma from early in life's history that is carried into the present, whether it be abuse or neglect or some major disaster of some sort that has happened in the course of the patient's life.

She goes on to speak about how those two understandings of trauma come from two different therapeutic perspectives that she uses.

P1: I'm responding from two clinical perspectives. One of which is as a psychoanalyst working psychoanalytically with deeply embedded trauma that is recurringly

debilitating in current life. The other is as a Red Cross mental health volunteer when I respond to someone whose house just burned down or something like that. So they're quite different.

In describing what the process of long-term treatment is like for complex trauma she said, "long-term treatment, is looking at and examining the sources of the trauma and metabolizing them in such a way that the patient can find resilience and return to more untroubled functioning." P4 spoke about the healing process as recognizing and digesting past events. "In the healing environment you're working to bring up these unprocessed, undigested situations, and recognize that there's been a trauma and then do what you can to hold it to recognize it to bring it forward in a safe way to heal it as much as possible." P5 also stated that trauma therapy "helps you metabolize it" with "it" being in reference to overwhelming "situations" from the past.

P1, 2, 4, 5, & 6 all stated that the symptoms of trauma manifest in a range of intensity. Several spoke about this range in terms of "big T trauma" to "little t trauma," and two also spoke about "medium t trauma." They saw big T trauma as referring to symptoms such as panic attacks, nightmares, and significant dissociation. In describing what could be considered significant medium t trauma P1 said,

P1: I would certainly say that patients that I'm seeing have chronic trauma and part of the basics of the treatment, they may not have full blown panic attacks, but the anxiety is often tremendously high and triggered and disabling and the depression can also be very disabling.

When asked how she would describe the symptoms of trauma using the Diagnostics and Statistics Manual Five (DSM5) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) P1 stated "well John I haven't read that in many years." P2 said he did not like the DSM's use of the words "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" because he felt that it pathologized a normal reaction to a stressful situation. He said he preferred to just talk about it as "traumatic stress." He also said that a person maybe "develops a phobia, maybe develops an addiction, other types of

maladaptive behavior because they're carrying the pain around that they've suppressed." In other words, even though such symptoms may not register as PTSD in the DSM 5, he still sees them as being a manifestation of trauma. P6 said he was comfortable calling whatever a client wanted to call a trauma a trauma.

P1, 2, & 5 saw their understandings of trauma as a foundational to their understandings of what they do as therapists. P2 began his answer to the first question, (which he had already read a week prior to the interview), as follows,

P2: I've had the opportunity to ponder that question and, its really not easy to answer that question because I see that trauma covers a very wide spectrum. I came across a quote attributed to Mark Epstein, who himself is a psychoanalyst and Buddhist practitioner, and essentially what Epstein said is that trauma is the bedrock of psychology. And I see that being, you know, so very true.

In other words, instead of defining trauma in a narrow sense as PTSD, P2 sees the understanding of trauma as a profound way of understanding what psychology is. The reference to Epstein is probably from his book *The Trauma of Everyday Life* in which he presents the fact that all humans experience trauma in life as the Buddha's First Noble Truth of suffering. According to Epstein, "...trauma does not just happen to a few unlucky people. It is the bedrock of our biology."<sup>7</sup> P2 is presenting his understanding of trauma in a similar way to how Epstein presents his understanding of "*Dukkha*" (suffering).<sup>8</sup> P1 made a similar statement to P2's above when asked what role neuroscience played in her definition of trauma.

P1: Well I think neuroscience helps us understand what psychoanalytic thinking in the 19th century just didn't have access to. It simply supports and illuminates what we see behaviorally and psychologically but with much more brain awareness. Where the trauma is in MRIs and those sorts of things.

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<sup>7</sup> Epstein, *The Trauma of Everyday Life*, 196.

<sup>8</sup> Epstein, 196.

In other words, as a psychoanalyst, P1 sees the neuroscientific understanding of trauma as correlating with the psychoanalytic understanding of trauma. This echoes Herman's view that Charcot and Freud, as two of the founders of Western psychiatry and psychoanalysis respectively, were focused on trauma and the treating of trauma. For P5, when asked if her understanding of trauma as a range of symptoms from unmetabolized experiences serves as an overall way for her to understand her work as a therapist she stated,

P5: I use the same kind of mental practices of understanding to understand everybody, and everybody presents differently, I don't even know they're traumatized sometimes, but also the dysregulation of OCD, you know would you call that trauma? It's traumatic in a way but you don't really use the trauma thinking about it, but I use the same thinking, I use the same thinking and then I have different practices depending on what people are presenting.

P5 was distinguishing between the more narrowly focused "trauma thinking" of the DSM diagnosis of PTSD and her broader way of thinking about trauma as big T, medium t, or small t trauma of experiences that need to be metabolized. One could say that P 1, 2, & 5's way that they think about trauma is wholistic like the way Freud talked about "complexes" and the Buddha talked about "*dukkha*." In other words, trauma serves as a fundamental unifying theme of understanding suffering in their theory and practice as psychotherapists.

P, 3, 5, and 6 all stated or agreed when asked that traumatic memories can arise as physical sensation, emotions, and or cognitive narratives. P 1, 3, and 5 used the understanding from interpersonal neurobiology about implicit and explicit memories to explain these phenomena. In addition, P1 used the psychoanalytic understanding of transference and countertransference. P6 used the understanding from computational neuroscience about how living organisms generate models of the world around them to explain these phenomena.

The following is an exchange between me and P1 in which, through an intersubjective exchange, we discuss trauma in terms of implicit and explicit memory. As mentioned in chapter

one in the article from the *Smith College Studies in Social Work* that integrates Herman's understanding of trauma with interpersonal neurobiology, the ability to distinguish between implicit and explicit memory is deemed to be an essential understanding for therapists and their clients to make.<sup>9</sup>

JF: So the idea of implicit memory and how a memory of trauma can manifest as body sensation or emotion and there may not be a narrative that goes with it.

P1: Totally that is my complete bailiwick in my writing and publishing and teaching. The body-mind, the psyche-soma, which I have been writing about for 30 years. And you reach it non-verbally.

JF: Right that the guts of the work so to speak is the physical, emotional, somatic part of it and the cognitive is, would you say it is secondary?

P1: Well it certainly supports it and is very helpful. I mean in my case I have adult patients who have cognitive sophistication, or they wouldn't be in psychoanalysis or psychoanalytic work. They value the cognitive a lot and I find it very helpful, but I certainly feel that the deeper transformation occurs at the level of the body-mind.

Siegel describes the difference between implicit and explicit memory in the context of trauma based on his triune theory of the brain as being composed of the reptile, old mammal, and new mammal parts of the brain.<sup>10</sup> According to Siegel, the experience of having a cognitive memory of an event correlates with activity in the hippocampus. The ability of the hippocampus to record explicit memory does not come online until about two years of age, but the ability to implicitly record memory becomes active in utero.<sup>11</sup> Thus, one could have a memory of early childhood that manifests as body sensation and emotion without a cognitive narrative attached to it. In a similar way Siegel states that during a traumatic event the explicit memory recording of the hippocampus can go offline but that the implicit memory recording of the event as emotion and

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<sup>9</sup> Zaleski, Johnson, and Klein, "Grounding Judith Herman's Trauma Theory within Interpersonal Neuroscience and Evidence-Based Practice Modalities for Trauma Treatment."

<sup>10</sup> Siegel, *Mindsight*, chap. 1, Kindle.

<sup>11</sup> Siegel, chap. 8, Kindle.

physical sensation stay online.<sup>12</sup> Thus, one could have a traumatic memory arise as sensation and emotion without a cognitive narrative of the traumatic event.

A little later in my interview with P1 when I asked her how Buddhist practice showed up in her counseling work, she spoke about organizing a conference on “mindfulness and psychotherapy” at a university in the 2000s that “was probably one of the first of such conferences on a wide scale.” The conference included Thich Nhat Hanh and some of his monastic students as well as Dan Siegel and Jack Kornfield. According to P1, one of the main outcomes of the conference was “legitimizing the power of this, this other leg of clinical work [i.e. the use of mindfulness practice in clinical work]. And I would say that it’s just fast-tracked all my work. I mean I can say things that I never would have said before. Like ““stop, breathe.”” You don’t say that in classical analysis.” Like P1, P5 has also written about a body-centered approach to understanding implicit and explicit memory. She defines trauma as “when the emotional brain gets overwhelmed, that kind of disintegration happens” and that “Dan Siegel’s [...] way of explaining implicit and explicit memory to me really explains traumatic experience and what you need to do to help solve it.”

P 3 & 4 described a characteristic effect of trauma as not being able to cope with a present situation or challenge. P6 described a characteristic effect as one’s cognitive capacity to understand and witness what is happening not functioning. P 4 & 5 describe trauma as “the past becoming present.” According to P3’s definition of trauma,

Trauma is when our normal coping mechanisms aren’t sufficient for whatever challenge is in front of us. And it creates a change in the physiology of the person so that they have an automatic response to certain stimuli, that begins to impact their lives in a really unbeneficial way. And they’re kind of stuck in that mode even when there isn’t any threat that’s visible.

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<sup>12</sup> Siegel, chap. 8, Kindle.

A stimulus in the present triggers a memory of past trauma that manifests as sensations, emotions, and a cognitive stance. The stimulus is misunderstood, i.e., misperceived, as a threat. Even if a person knows cognitively that they are being triggered, they nevertheless still have the sensations and emotions come up. This can result in acts of aggression, acts of avoidance, and or acts of dissociation. Like P1 mentioned above, P3 also contends that “the method of healing, has to be not just changing the understanding, the story, the narrative that a person has for integrating it, but actually down to the physiological response.”

## **Question Two**

**Using the language of your Buddhist education, training, and practice, please speak about your understanding of what trauma is.**

A common initial response to this question was that the person had not thought about it before, or that they did not think Buddhism explicitly recognized and defined trauma. P1 responded by stating “That’s a good question. I didn’t put it together in my interview preparation last night at 11pm.” P2 stated “I don’t see Buddhism addressing trauma as such.” P4 stated that “I don’t think it [i.e., Buddhism] defines trauma in and of itself from a Buddhist language...” P4 also stated that Buddhism talks about suffering in general and that trauma could be included in that, but that “we don’t say you know ‘you’re going to get abused’ that’s not in the vocabulary, so you know that’s the real focus I think in trauma therapy...” P5 did not provide a definition of trauma using Buddhist language but instead spoke about using Buddhist practice to respond to trauma. At the beginning of the interview, she stated “OK so I looked at these questions and I have to say something about this. Which is that I’m sort of the opposite of academic so when you say to use the language of my profession, I kind of get bottled up.” Her response to this second

question by talking about applied practice as opposed to abstract theory can be seen as her preferring not to speak in academic terms.

P3 & 6 did give a definition of trauma using Buddhist terms. P3 defined trauma using the language of the eight consciousnesses. The following is P3's initial response to the question.

P3: So trauma is situations from the outside that are toxic that feed the seeds, that water the seeds, the unwholesome seeds, that begin to create a lot of suffering, and that the way a person finds to cope with all of that just waters more unwholesome seeds, and creates more and more suffering. And that it creates a situation in which there's not a lot of mindfulness, and there's not a lot of concentration, and there's not a lot of insight so that's it.

Thich Nhat Hanh taught that the store consciousness stores mental formations as seeds that can get stimulated (i.e., watered) by external stimuli, i.e., "situations from the outside," as well as internal stimuli, i.e., "the way a person finds to cope."<sup>13</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh also taught a common Buddhist teaching that summed up the practice of the Eightfold Path as mindfulness, concentration, and insight.<sup>14</sup> So P3 can be said to be defining trauma in Buddhist terms as a situation in which a person is not able to practice the Eightfold Path. The following is P6's initial response.

P6: Yeah. I mean it's suffering that's too big to hold. [...] Capital T trauma is suffering that is much too big to hold and so that when you attempt to it waters the seed of suffering. You can have other suffering that's very painful and you want to call trauma. But that either with the assistance of someone else's presence or with your own you're able to actually, to at least some... and you might not be able to be present with it in a compassionate way, but at least you're able to sort of witness it to some extent.

P6's definition draws from a combination of the First Noble Truth of suffering (*dukkha*) and the teachings on the eight consciousnesses to define trauma. I responded to P6 with this follow up question.

JF: And so when you say seed, I assume you're referring to the eight consciousnesses and the mental formations being stored in the store consciousness,

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<sup>13</sup> Hanh, *Understanding Our Mind*, 25; Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*, 31-37.

<sup>14</sup> Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*, 81.

P6: Yeah the Yogacara idea of like *bīja* [seed].

P6 was the only participant to explicitly mention “Yogacara” and he was the only participant to use the Sanskrit term “*bija*.” He had the longest and most intensive training with Thich Nhat Hanh before becoming a therapist. Apparently, he was more used to theorizing about trauma in Buddhist language.

When I followed up with P3 by asking her to say more about what she meant by seeds we had the following exchange.

JF: OK so I know what you mean by all that because I share the same tradition as you but so just to unpack it for other people, the seeds and the consciousness can you say more about what is a seed in terms of Buddhist technical jargon and what is the consciousness?

P3: Ok so the technical jargon I don’t know about. I really haven’t, maybe I do know about it but I haven’t put it together that way.

JF: OK I can help you.

P3: Yes, yeah, OK you tell me.

JF: OK I’ll say some stuff and you tell me if it makes sense or not.

P3: OK, very user friendly

As can be seen here, even though P3 gave an initial definition of trauma using Buddhist language, when asked to give more detail it became clear that she was not used to theorizing about trauma in Buddhist language. I first met P3 at an OI monastery while I was still a monk. I see the exchange above as an intersubjective interaction in which we agree to let me use my background as a monk with Thich Nhat Hanh to explore the definition of trauma using Buddhist language. The following is part of the exchange that followed between us.

JF: So basically all of our past experiences are stored as seeds in our store consciousness, and those seeds, the technical term is a mental formation,

P3: Yeah, yeah

JF: And they come up and manifest when they get watered, they can manifest

P3: Yeah

JF: They can manifest as body sensation, emotion

P3: Right

JF: Thinking, a combination of those three things. OK

P3: Yep.

JF: That all makes sense?

P3: Yes it did, yes of course

We both had heard Thich Nhat Hanh give these teachings many times. As seen above, she was able to offer an initial definition using those terms. But she did not relate to that theory from a scholastic doctrinal perspective. She related to it as an applied practical theory. However, when I used the Yogacara language to define trauma she recognized and agreed with my definition. She normally uses the language of neuroscience to speak about trauma in a theoretical way.

P1 & 4 asked me what my definition was using Buddhist terms. When I defined it using the language of the eight consciousnesses P1 explicitly agreed with me and P4 gave tacit agreement.<sup>15</sup> When I brought up the eight consciousnesses to P 2 & 5 as a way to define trauma they also agreed with me. Thus, in the end, everyone agreed with the Yogacara definition of trauma as certain kinds of mental formations arising from the store consciousness. The following is an exchange between P1 and I in which we define trauma using Yogacara language.

P1: Yeah do you want to say something? I would love to hear what you have to say about this and thinking about the language and so forth, and that we share with this tradition.

JF: Well when I was a trauma therapy client I was working with this woman named Stephanie Mines in Boulder and she had trained under Peter Levine so she was using Somatic Experiencing. So when I became a monk with Thich Nhat Hanh he was teaching the Four Foundations of Mindfulness and I felt like “oh this is the same thing” like I’m doing the same thing. So using the vocabulary of the store consciousness and mental formations and how mental formations can be body sensations and emotions not just cognitive content. So it felt to me like this is a vocabulary that is talking about, umm I equated the term mental formation with the term implicit memory

P1: Umm Hmm yep

[break where P1’s partner came home with her two dogs]

P1: OK I have to be standing to think about implicit memory and store consciousness, OK

JF: So I guess I’m wondering if it is possible to describe trauma using Buddhist vocabulary and does that fit or does that work?

P1: Yes I tend not, when working with patients, to use too much vocabulary that’s technical from anywhere but it is how I understand it absolutely.

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<sup>15</sup> As discussed below, when I defined trauma using the eight consciousnesses P4 said she could define it that way but that that was different from using Buddhist teachings to explicitly recognize interpersonal abuse.

Like P3 above, once I defined trauma using Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings P1 agreed with my definition. All six participants agreed when asked if they thought a mental formation could arise as sensation, emotion, and or cognition. In the quote above P1 went on to add that she uses the teachings on the eight consciousnesses to map out in her own mind what is happening clinically during a therapy session. In other words, it is a primary theoretical map that she draws from. She went on to say, "You know you can't take the Buddhist out of me and you can't take the psychoanalyst out of me." In other words, for her the theory and practice of psychoanalysis and the theory and practice of Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings were inexorably intertwined. When asked P2 and P5 also said they use the eight consciousnesses to map what is happening clinically during a therapy session.

I followed up on the exchange with P1 above by asking her a series of questions to see how she correlated the Yogacara teachings with her psychoanalytic theory.

JF: So would you roughly equate the unconscious with store consciousness?

P1: Yes, yes. I think Freud lastly thought of the unconscious as being more of the negative seeds you know that are repressed so I like the Buddhist opening up, the seeds that are beautiful, and flowers and seeds that are weeds and [unclear]

JF: And would you roughly equate the term complex with the term mental formation?

P1: Yes

JF: And a complex can be physical sensation and emotion as well as cognitive material?

P1: Yes, and I access that through countertransference which I don't think Buddhist lingo talks about.

JF: Right OK I know roughly what countertransference means but could you say more about that?

P1: Well these are the feelings that the patient is experiencing that are projected into the therapist so the therapist suddenly feels uptight or anxious or aggressive or something that's usually unwanted and unpleasant. Or it might be a feeling that's longing I mean a patient that really needs to be held and rocked and secure that missed that as an infant. I might feel an inclination to rock in my chair or something like that.

In this exchange P1 reveals how she has mutually critically correlated the Yogacara teachings with psychoanalytic teachings. In general, she equates the two theories but sees the Buddhist

teachings as having a more wholistic understanding of the unconscious in that it includes both wholesome and unwholesome seeds. In addition, while she sees a mental formation and a complex as being equivalent, she sees the Freudian understanding of countertransference as providing an interpersonal way of being in touch with a client's mental formations through her experience of sensation and emotion in her own body. She does not see Buddhism as speaking to that experience. I will discuss this exchange in the next chapter as an example of P1 engaging in mutual critical correlation between Buddhism and Western psychology.

As mentioned above P4 stated that she did not see where Buddhism explicitly talked about trauma. When she asked me how I defined trauma I gave a similar answer to the one I gave P1 above. After she heard my answer, she responded by making a distinction between my defining trauma as symptoms in Buddhist phenomenological terms and her defining trauma as interpersonal abuse in a sociopolitical context.

P4: OK so you're talking about trauma as the reaction to the event, got it.

JF: Mmm hmm, yeah

P4: And that's why you're looking at the implicit memory etc. cause I'm talking about how do we explain how people do what they do to each other?

JF: Right

P4: As "the trauma"

JF: Yeah yeah yeah

P4: It's like you're talking about the trauma as the response to the difficulty and I'm looking at where do we find that people are really hurtful to each other? As you know, creating war or abuse or whatever so I got it, now I see where you're at. I mean I could talk about that too, but I kept trying to go back to "where do they talk about" because you know, we're always practicing loving kindness compassion etc. so how do you explain that not everybody is like that? And I mean I know how we explain it, but it still can feel unimaginable.

Like P1 above, P4 mutually critically correlated her Buddhist understanding of trauma and her trauma therapy understanding of trauma. P1 added to the Buddhist understanding by talking about countertransference as a way to talk about mental formations. P4 pointed out a deficiency in the Buddhist understanding by stating that the Buddhist teachings did not speak of trauma in a

social context. It only described ideal positive behavior. She stated that she could explain trauma in Buddhist language as a phenomenological experience of symptoms. But she stated the Buddhist imaginary was bereft of explaining trauma as interpersonal abuse. This example of P4 engaging in mutual critical correlation here will be discussed further in the next chapter.

### **Question Three**

**Please speak about how your Buddhist education, training, and practice shows up when you are with a client working on trauma.**

The responses to this question were some of the most diverse material in the interviews. Space does not allow for a full discussion of all their answers. Instead, I have picked one example from each participant that demonstrates how they make use of Buddhist practice in trauma therapy work. P1 spoke about meditation on Buddha Nature as a way to cultivate acceptance, patience, and strong determination in long-term therapy with clients who have deep developmental trauma. She combines Freudian psychoanalysis with interpersonal neurobiology and Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on Yogacara psychology. In the exchange below she describes how she combines mindfulness of breathing with mindfulness of Buddha Nature as core elements of her trauma therapy practice. It starts by me summarizing what she had just said about teaching her clients mindfulness.

JF: So you felt calling attention to the body, calling attention to mindfulness of breathing is what helped them be with that intense [traumatic] material?

P1: Yes. Yes.

JF: And it [meaning her own mindfulness practice during therapy sessions] helped you being with them being with it?

P1: Absolutely. Absolutely. [I'm laughing as she says this] I'm also a bit of a bulldog I don't give up, I don't run away, I'm not afraid, I mean thank God I have that ground in my own being. I actually like working with really really troubled people. And it might take a really long time but I don't, we don't stop, I don't give up. I think that is another piece, and we get that from our Zen master [Thich Nhat Hanh,] I mean he doesn't give up either. You know I mean here he is still, I mean I would have said "uncle let me out of here" after that stroke [in 2014].

JF: [laugh]

P1: He's still teaching. He's still showing up.

JF: So that feeling of that bulldog mental formation, we could call it a wholesome mental formation, you experience it as a source of stamina in a sense?

P1: Yes, stamina, resilience, strength, focus, devotion, yeah, and I also believe, which is also Buddhist nourished, in the Buddha Nature of everyone and the infinite potential that everyone has, and has as a birthright to express and to live.

JF: So you can get into the roots of somebody's psyche and be dealing with the gnarliest level of compost because there is the Buddha Nature and there is the practice that allows that Buddha Nature to do the composting work.

P1: Exactly. Well put!

JF: [laugh] Thanks

A common tradition in the OI that Thich Nhat Hanh established is the act of greeting another person by joining one's hands in front of one's heart and bowing to the other person while silently reciting "a lotus for you, a Buddha to be."<sup>16</sup> The poem is based on the traditional Mahayana teaching that everyone has the capacity to become a Buddha. In a chant Thich Nhat Hanh wrote for taking refuge in the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, he described the Buddha as the "one who shows me the way in this life," "the path of light and beauty in the world," and a person's "awakened nature" and "Mind of Love."<sup>17</sup> In a practice song entitled *Being an Island Unto Myself* he taught that "Buddha is my mindfulness, shining near, shining far."<sup>18</sup> P1's belief that everyone has Buddha Nature within them is consistent with Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on taking refuge in the Buddha as an innate capacity of mindfulness and compassion.

Thich Nhat Hanh spoke of the lotus flower as a symbol of awakening because they grew from putting their roots in the mud at the bottom of a pond.<sup>19</sup> In the same way a farmer

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<sup>16</sup> Hanh, Thich Nhat, *Present Moment Wonderful Moment: Mindfulness Verses for Daily Living* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Hanh, Thich Nhat, *Chanting from the Heart: Buddhist Ceremonies and Daily Practices* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2002), 402-403.

<sup>18</sup> "Songs / Being an Island Unto Myself," Plum Village, May 14, 2020, <https://plumvillage.org/songs/being-island-unto-myself/>.

<sup>19</sup> Hanh, Thich Nhat, *No Mud, No Lotus: The Art of Transforming Suffering* (Berkeley, California: Parallax Press, 2014).

transforms compost into flowers, he taught that a practitioner should embrace suffering with the energy of mindfulness in order to transform it into understanding and love. P1's practice as a psychoanalyst is focused on embracing and transforming the mud of trauma into the flowers of wholeness and well-being. Her belief that everyone has Buddha Nature is foundational to that process.

P2 spoke about meditating on emptiness during therapy as a way to cultivate an unconditional positive regard for the client. In Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on Dharma Discussion he teaches that the practitioners should practice using "deep listening" and "loving speech." OI members commit to doing this practice in their everyday lives with their family and friends as a way of keeping the precept on not using false or harmful speech. One tries to listen only for the sake of understanding the other person and responding to them with wisdom and compassion. According to P2,

OK. I had an experience about five or six years ago. I was sitting in my den looking at my bookcase with all the various books on psychology [slight laugh] and suddenly it dawned on me that, I don't treat people, that I don't intervene, maybe I do, I don't diagnose, and you know I looked at my books, you know covering various types of psychology and interventions and whatever, and I thought "wait a minute, what's going on here?" And I must mention that my particular Dharma Door is signlessness. And the books that really caught my eye were the books that I have that were written by Carl Rogers and his statement "unconditional positive regard" just popped up. And I said "that's what I do. That's how I work." And it related directly to the Buddhist idea of love, compassion, respect, and literally, literally being empty. Just being there for the person, no judgement, no evaluation... You know like I said most of the folks I've been working with for the past five years have committed crimes, I don't care what their crime is. That to me is beside the point. If they want to bring that up, and say "you know I see that I have something going on here and I don't want to do what I did in the past," you know then we obviously address it. And you know getting back to the Buddhist aspect, uh, habit energies [i.e., mental formations]. OK what are the habit energies that are going on here? But I find that just being willing to be with people, to not have any expectations, to not go into a session with some agenda... I go in, whatever unfolds unfolds. And frankly I have been told several times by the people I've worked with "[P2], you are a really good listener." And to me I said "whoa OK that's exactly what I want to be." So I see that my Buddhist practice has really transformed

the way I do therapy. And you know maybe some of these models are good for people, but they no longer really have any relevance to me.

Thich Nhat Hanh often taught about the “Three Doors of Liberation” from the *Discourse on the Dharma Seal*.<sup>20</sup> Similar to the three marks of existence from Theravada Buddhism, these teachings are meant to help a person attain liberating insight, thus they are doors to awakening. The three doors in the discourse are emptiness, signlessness, and aimlessness. With emptiness one contemplates the emptiness of a separate self in phenomena. With signlessness one practices letting go of applying labels to experience in order to just be with experience as it arises. With aimlessness one practices letting go of desiring for a certain outcome. Originally these were meant to be practiced in meditation. With Thich Nhat Hanh’s style of engaged Buddhism he taught that they could also be practiced interpersonally.

In the interview P2 said he did not like the DSM because he felt like it reduced people to medical pathologies instead of seeing them in a more holistic fashion. He stated that he was very careful with “labeling” and tried to avoid it as much as possible beyond just recognizing basic habit energies such as anxiety, anger, happiness, or compassion. His practice of unconditional positive regard along with not having an agenda can also be seen as a practice of aimlessness. One of Thich Nhat Hanh’s core teachings was that the energy of mindfulness naturally strengthens wholesome mental formations and weakens unwholesome one.<sup>21</sup> P2’s practice of being empty and not labeling during therapy speaks to a deep trust in that process.

P3 spoke about teaching the practice of right effort as a form of Buddhist popular education on trauma and the stages of recovery. She used the Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses as her implicit framework to describe the practice of cultivating wholesome

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<sup>20</sup> “Discourse on the Dharma Seal,” Plum Village, October 10, 2014, <https://plumvillage.org/sutra/discourse-on-the-dharma-seal/>.

<sup>21</sup> Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teaching*, 74.

habit energies and abandoning unwholesome habit energies. Thich Nhat Hanh taught that in meditation practice one first had to cultivate pleasant and joyful mental formations to give one the stability and strength to embrace the unwholesome ones.<sup>22</sup> According to P3,

P3: Well I think the first thing is what I would, what Thay [aka Thich Nhat Hanh (Thay is “teacher” in Vietnamese)] calls “right effort” or “right diligence,” teach a person that model, and begin to focus on watering and maintaining the wholesome seeds. And that they need that in order to begin to address the unwholesome ones or to have the strength or the security or the refuge and in that time, you can develop a stronger more resilient person who can then feel more self-confident about and hopeful that they can confront some of the more difficult areas. And so just describing it in that very simple way, in addition to educating them about their physiology.

P3 weds her OI understanding of the eight consciousnesses as a Buddhist psychology with somatic trauma therapy. In particular she uses TRM and CRM by Elaine Miller Karas which is based in large part on the principles of Levine’s SE.<sup>23</sup> In that context watering positive seeds means supporting the client in getting in touch with neutral to pleasant body sensations. Embracing the unwholesome seeds would be the pendulation of awareness between pleasant and unpleasant sensations in the body. Educating the client about his/her/their physiology is to teach them about the different instinctual responses to safety and threat, namely social engagement, fight or flight, and freeze. It is also to teach about implicit and explicit memory and how experiences in the present can trigger past trauma.

CRM is a community level intervention that is taught to a group in the form of a multi-day workshop. During the interview I asked P3 about her experience leading CRM workshops in Israel and Palestine. I was interested in finding out if the SE practices of resourcing, pendulation, and titration made up the core trauma metabolizing work of CRM.

JF: And so in the workshop it’s, first of all just helping people wrap there head around what they’re trying to do, and then it’s, ok we’re gonna practice getting in touch with pleasant neutral sensations. And even if we have something intense that’s unpleasant

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<sup>22</sup> Hanh, 103

<sup>23</sup> Miller-Karas, *Building Resilience to Trauma*.

happening we're letting that be there but we're choosing to focus on pleasant neutral sensations, and letting go of whatever the cognitive story is about it. And then taking in bite sized doses of the unpleasant sensation after there's been

P3: Right

JF: So would you say that was the guts of what you were doing?

P3: Yeah

JF: And so the kind of radical shift is letting go of the cognitive story, not suppressing the emotion but choosing to be aware of the body sensation as the main focus.

P3: Right, right

JF: And that that's the radical shift for people is shifting to body sensation?

P3: The radical thing to me was how quickly some of those neural pathways lose their punch. I mean they might come back again in a few minutes. But the person has this profound experience of wow it's not such a big deal.

I was speaking about shifting attention to and giving priority to body sensation over emotion and thought, and the skillful placing of attention to different types of sensation, as a radical shift to bottom-up processing. I also meant this is a radical shift from giving priority to emotions and narrative via a top-down form of processing. (Levine has distinguished between processing trauma through body sensation and processing trauma through cognitive content as bottom-up processing vs top-down processing respectively.) P3 confirmed that shift as the technique of CRM but then went on to speak about the radical ability of a person's body and mind to organically metabolize trauma as a result of the technique. P3 is pointing to a practice of metabolizing trauma that trusts in the wisdom of the body to do the work and that relies less on conceptual knowledge and emotional expression.

Another radical element of what P3 is doing is engaging in the trauma work at a group level instead of as one-on-one therapy. During the interview P3 stated "I also want to say that I'm not that interested in deep therapy anymore. Not that it isn't valuable, but it may not be pertinent.[...] I guess the question is "when is it [i.e., the process and goals of trauma therapy] good enough for the state of the world?" You know, how much nutrition do we need to keep ourselves going?" In other words, P3 advocates for greater collective awareness of trauma via

popular education about neuroscience, and devoting collective resources to a community-based body-centered approach to respond to it. Instead of trying to get a small number of people completely healed from trauma she advocates for getting a large number of people healed enough from trauma for a healthy society. Instead of using the social context of one-on-one therapy where it is just the therapist and the client involved in the process, P3 is presenting the social context of a group setting where the facilitator and the group are involved in the process. This means then a collective witnessing of individual participants' trauma by the group resulting in a collective understanding and response to trauma.

P4 spoke about how for her, a therapy session is a session of mindfulness practice in which she is aware of her breathing, what is going on within her, and what is going on with the client. She also spoke about what wholesome mental formations she cultivates during a session and the use of her intuitive mind as opposed to her conceptual ego mind. According to P4,

I'm practicing mindfulness the whole time. I'm aware of my breath, I'm aware of holding a space, and I'm attentive to what I am seeing, hearing, and sensing all at once. So being mindful you can really open to your intuitive self which is part of, you know the way I work. So just the container and then also the practice of non-judgement, you know without cutting off feeling what I might be experiencing, and you know aware of what's transference or what's countertransference, or what's valuable to speak and what's not valuable to speak. You know I'm, ho-how, I can say, and maybe this isn't true but I believe it, I have a really good awareness of what's going on. I'm not in an ego place I'm in a really big space of holding. And aware of what's happening with me, what's happening with them.

[....]

And then specifically then with trauma, you know I think it takes a lot of presence, it takes a lot of breath, it takes non-judgement, it takes bringing them back,

[....]

You know so depending on the depth of the trauma, you know how I hold it, just like you said is the first thing I do is, you have to hold the container, you have to hold the non-judgement, you have to hold the goodness, and in some way offer that as a healing vessel to all of what's going on with that person. To not cause them to suffer so deeply.

Thich Nhat Hanh would often cite a phrase from the Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*Satipatthana Sutta*) that is repeated for each of the four establishments of body,

feelings, mind, and object of mind. Here is the phrase for the body, “This is how the practitioner remains established in the observation of the body in the body, observation of the body from within or from without, or both from within or from without.”<sup>24</sup> He explained this teaching by stating that a practitioner should be mindful of what is going on inside him/her/their-self and what is going on in the people around them. As discussed above, P1 stated that during an experience of countertransference she could sometimes perceive in her own body and emotions mental formations her client was experiencing. P4 seems to be describing the experience of mindfulness inside herself and outside in the client that Thich Nhat Hanh taught. Her description of her experience is similar to P1’s description of countertransference. But P4 also seems to be indicating that she is able to tune in to what is going on with the client beyond just times of countertransference. In addition, her cultivation of the breath, containment, goodness, and non-judgement that she offers as a healing vessel seems to be based on a similar experience of connection and attunement that the client experiences in relation to her. She describes her intuitive mind as being able to experience multiple things going on at the same time and as being able to judge when to act or not. The experience sounds similar to that of a musician playing in a group or of a dancer dancing as part of an ensemble.

P5 spoke about therapy as teaching the client the practice of the four establishments of mindfulness based on Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings, MBSR, and MSC. At the core of that practice is what she calls the “mindful check-in” in which one becomes aware of the breathing, body sensations, emotions, and thoughts with an open “don’t know mind.” According to P5,

I call it the mindful check-in, body, emotions, thoughts, it’s, Thay says it’s, stopping is the first practice of mindfulness. I teach stopping I give everybody a pebble, and it’s their stopping stone. And they learn to stop a few times a day. Touching the pebble, saying stop, and taking three breaths with awareness. But the mindful check-in is the

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<sup>24</sup> “Discourse on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness,” Plum Village, November 3, 2021, <https://plumvillage.org/library/sutras/discourse-on-the-four-establishments-of-mindfulness/>.

true stopping. So slowly they build that in where they check in, they take the breaths but “what is my body feeling? What emotions are here? What thoughts are here?” without thinking about them just observing.

[....]

And that mindfulness, the don’t-know mind, the am-I-sure? mind, is so deeply important to helping people and helping oneself, and a lot of Western psychology is very dichotomous, and it’s full of judging. Western psychology doesn’t teach us to do awareness of judging.

[....]

Thay talks about stopping, doing that mindful check-in, in body, emotions, thoughts, is the true stopping that gives that space that then we can use to remember our don’t-know mind or remember our soothing touch or whatever, and then we can shift how we’re paying attention to the thing.

P5 is making use of the four establishments of mindfulness as a contemplative structure for her therapy practice. She is teaching her clients and students to be aware of the habit energies of sensation, emotion, and thought that are happening in the present moment. She is using the WVM interpretation of the four establishments based on the Mahasi Vipassana theoretical system of translating *vedana* as emotion instead of sensation. Thich Nhat Hanh does the same. She is replacing the normal WVM focus on the three marks of impermanence, suffering, and no self with Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings on the don’t know mind as the fourth establishment (*dhamma*). By stating that the don’t know mind makes it possible to become aware of judging, she is also speaking about becoming aware of the thinking mind from a deeper witnessing mind that does not identify with the judging mind.

Because P5 is an MBSR teacher as well as an OI member, she places a great deal of focus on the body-scan practice, the core practice of MBSR. Even though she is using the WVM’s open understanding of the four establishments as phenomena that can spontaneously arise in one’s awareness, (as opposed to the GV understanding focused on sensations as arising within the five links), she privileges body sensation in a way that is similar to GV. According to P5,

To notice that body sensations can sometimes create the thoughts that are problematic for you and so if you take care of your body it can actually help you settle.

[...]

This is what I think the gift that Jon Kabat-Zinn gives us in the way that he created that course and has us teach it. Working with your body is so much easier as a starting place.

Thich Nhat Hanh always taught that one should become aware of one's breathing first and then weave in the rest of one's experience. He also would teach the sixteen exercises as a progression that started with the body, then the emotions, then the thoughts, and then different Dharma Doors like emptiness or interdependence. But when he taught about mindfulness of emotions arising as mental formations from the store consciousness, he did not privilege body sensations in relation to emotions. As discussed above, P3 privileges body sensation via her use of TRM and CRM. Here we can see that P5 privileges body sensation via the focus on the body-scan in MBSR.

P6 spoke about therapy as a practice of cultivating awareness, equanimity, loving kindness, and compassion for himself and for the client, and helping the client cultivate those same mental formations in relation to their own experience. He sees Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on the eight consciousnesses in the context of embracing suffering as a form of "parts therapy"—similar to Internal Family Systems (IFS) therapy—in which the person is relating to different parts of themselves. Thich Nhat Hanh taught that loving kindness and compassion naturally arise from understanding, either understanding of oneself or of another person. P6's approach to therapy follows that same logic. He supports his Buddhist approach with biological research on the emotions of mammals. According to P6,

I think my practice is all about trying to stay with the person, put myself in their shoes.

[...]

And so I think that kind of equanimity of being able to start by just being present with someone suffering without needing to do anything about it allows me to be, have an alliance with them to start. And I feel like that sort of alliance orientation is more helpful than anything. Also recognizing if someone is in a lot of suffering noticing the

ways that that touches suffering in me, and being able to practice self-compassion so that I can stay present with them.

[...]

Like what I would say if you want me to be really honest the way that Buddhism shows up for me in the consulting room is I've learned a lot about myself, through my practice, and that's really what I'm drawing on. And what I've learned with myself and what I've learned with experimenting with clients is like, um, being able to see what's, being able to see what's beautiful in a person and being able to love that person is healing.

[...]

It's just like I love this person. And I want to help them see that this part of themselves is actually really loveable. That's the language that feels the truest.

[...]

JF: And then in terms of supporting them if they, within a session are getting overwhelmed or dysregulated, um, yeah what?

P6: I use some kind of loving kindness practice, I find um, if we find some very easy and natural way to either send or receive compassion, so like sending love to a puppy, or it might be receiving love from your grandmother, or from Jesus, from whatever is really easy. We usually before going into trauma we'll find something is some type of a visualization type of practice that can create a positive physiological state in less than a minute. So for you it might be visualizing holding a puppy. Right? If you become dysregulated we come back to the puppy. And I find that for me is just so much more efficient than trying to come back to the breath or the body or the room.

P6 described a process of training that he went through to develop his skill as a Buddhist counselor. He stated that he first learned a lot about himself through his own practice. He uses that understanding to help him understand his clients. He also stated that he has learned how to do counseling by experimenting with clients. This process of training is similar to psychoanalytic training in which a person first learns about his/her/their own self through undergoing analysis. Then they provide therapy for others. In other words, they are guiding people through an experience that is similar to the experience that they themselves have already gone through. P6 uses his experience of learning to understand and love himself as a core resource for teaching others to do the same for themselves. This is similar to how Thich Nhat Hanh trained his monastic students. He taught that to the degree a monastic had embraced and transformed his/her/their own suffering, he/she/they was able to help other do the same.

As mentioned above, P6 sees trauma a “suffering that is too big to hold” and that it can manifest on a spectrum from big, to medium, to small t trauma. He also sees suffering as a mental formation or a combination of mental formations arising from the store consciousness. His practice of trauma therapy then is to learn how to understand and love painful mental formations. During therapy he tries to understand and love the client and himself by recognizing and being with the mental formations that arise in the client and in himself. He also tries to teach the client to do the same with their experience. During the interview P6 mentioned that he draws from affective neuroscientist Jaak Panksepp’s work on “seven primary emotional circuits that all mammals share.”<sup>25</sup> The two circuits that are relevant to helping a person establish stability and love are the “care circuit” and the “play circuit.” P6 works with his clients to cultivate the emotions of play and care by imagining a puppy, a loved one, or some other being for whom it is easy for the client to feel those emotions towards. With that as a home base he works with the client to embrace suffering.

#### **Question Four**

**Please speak about how your trauma therapy education, training, and practice shows up in your Buddhist practice, including your relationship with other sangha members?**

The responses to this question reveal a complex territory of theory and practice that the participants navigate as trauma-informed members of their sanghas and as Dharma teachers. Their answers converged and diverged from each other in how they distinguished between Buddhism and trauma therapy. The distinctions that came up were between: therapy versus Buddhist practice; a “safe enough” space to deal with small and medium t trauma versus a space of “deep safety” to deal with big T trauma; the medical model of therapy versus the model of

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<sup>25</sup> Wikipedia, s.n., “Jaak Panksepp,” last modified August 23, 2022, 7:55, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jaak\\_Panksepp&oldid=1034733102](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jaak_Panksepp&oldid=1034733102).

transforming suffering in Buddhism; the role of the Dharma teacher versus the role of the therapist; and when it is appropriate to intervene in a sangha situation and when is it not. In following response from P1 she makes a distinction between Buddhism and trauma therapy.

I have always felt that Buddhist practice alone was just one piece of the path to wellbeing. And that one's own particular inner trauma and history and uniqueness needed to be heard and expressed, and we saw in like psychoanalytic communities where there was just some really out of control behavior that people that hadn't had deep therapy, and I would love to talk with you further about this, because you've lived in Buddhist, you know in the monastery, and I know you were in other traditions after, but yeah in a lot of cases those people did not have any introspective history or awareness of themselves and their behavioral impact on other people. So I definitely feel that my psychoanalytic understanding helps me see the conflict in a Buddhist community or in a sangha, in a big sangha, you see, I know what's going on based on that. Very, very helpful and valuable.

The “out of control behavior” P1 is referring to is the behavior of certain psychoanalysts in her region who had not transformed their own suffering enough so that they would not act out in inappropriate ways with their clients and or other psychoanalysts. P1 saw a similar theme with some of the OI monastics who, even though they kept their monastic rule and did not act out in an egregious way, still had not done deep internal work on themselves. In other words, just because someone is a therapist, or a monastic does not mean they have done deep inner work. Her understanding of trauma helped her to see all of these things in sangha in a way that her Buddhist training did not. She also points out that a comprehensive path to wellbeing for humans should include both Buddhist practice and personal trauma healing.

P 2, 3 & 4 also stated that they use their trauma therapy training to recognize trauma in the sangha and that that was a skill they had not learned from their Buddhist training. P2 told a story about how it came to his attention that there was a male practitioner involved in some local sanghas in P2's region had acted inappropriately with some female sangha members in terms of sexual misconduct. P2 was tasked by his fellow OI members in the region to approach the man,

tell him he could no longer participate in any of the sanghas, and that if he got therapy and participated in a twelve-step group, that maybe in the future he could return. P2 said the OI members also offered counseling to the women who had been affected, and that the OI North American Dharma Teacher Council developed a policy of the OI on how to prevent and or respond to sexual misconduct in the OI sanghas. P3 described a woman in her residential sangha who had a traumatized past. P3 said that since she knew the sangha member had some past trauma, and that she was a sincere practitioner. P3 was able to be more patient with the woman's unskillful behavior. P4 described a similar situation with a veteran in her local sangha.

P6 stated that the theory and practice of somatic trauma therapy and certain elements of neuroscience were useful in explaining certain Buddhist teachings to people but that fundamentally, the Buddhist theory and practice he learned from Thich Nhat Hanh was what he used in his practice as a therapist and as a sangha member. In addition, because psychotherapy was based in the medical model which pathologized people and required a clinical context for healing, he saw it as a net negative. According to P6 "...in terms of working with trauma, umm, I relate more with somatic psychologies than not, like they're all sort of a proxy for my Buddhist practice, I feel like they don't really add anything." In the following exchange between P6 and I, P6 starts off by discussing the effectiveness of Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings for dealing with trauma.

P6: [Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on embracing and transforming suffering are] as good as or better than any other sort of Western orientation around trauma that I've come across.

JF: Yeah that the Western stuff gives you a certain clinical language that you can use as a matrix...

P6: That I find unhelpful, that I find has a negative level, amount of value, in my experience.

JF: [laugh] it can actually make things more complicated than it needs to be.

P6: Yes I dislike, I dislike the clinical type of relationship, I dislike clinical language...

JF: The whole medical model.

P6: The whole medical model.

This brings us to the distinction between safe enough and deep safety, and what conditions are necessary to provide deep safety. In the quote from P1 above she states that Buddhist practice alone is not sufficient to deal with inner trauma whereas P6 does see Buddhist practice as being sufficient. Similar to P1's perspective, according to P4, "...in a therapy room you need to have deep safety, [...] but I don't think the sanghas are deep safety. Some people come into them without all the history or the awareness of what's going on and they think it's deep safety. I think it's safe enough." In other words, P4 sees local sanghas as providing enough safety to deal with small t and medium t trauma but not enough safety to deal with big T trauma. P1 made a similar remark by stating,

P1: I don't think of Buddhism as sponsoring uncovering and opening up [trauma] so much, I mean there is some, don't be afraid of the feelings, embrace the feelings, but you're not really invited to elaborate on them or follow your free associations to where they take you as much as you are in therapy.

JF: Yeah that therapy provides a certain kind of container that allows for that exploration that normal Buddhist practice or training does not do.

P1: Right

P6 does think Buddhism can be used to deal with the full range of trauma. According to P6,

...one thing that I do have when I'm leading retreats is that sometimes I'm leading a retreat and people will talk about the limitations of mindfulness practice or they'll say well you know mindfulness shouldn't be used for trauma, mindfulness is not appropriate for this type of person or that type of person, and I can just say that um, a, mindfulness can be misused by anyone, and a sort of a weak mindfulness practice is not as helpful as a strong other type of practice, but that it is definitely my lived experience that any level or depth of suffering or form of suffering, can be, like, can be transformed by the teachings that I've learned from Thay [Thich Nhat Hanh] and that I practice with and that I share with people.

As mentioned above P1 stated that she can't separate the psychoanalyst part of herself from the Buddhist part of herself and that she correlates her psychoanalytic theory and practice with her Buddhist theory practice. In a similar vein even though P4 stated that "I think it's really

important to be very clear what's practice and what's therapy," she also stated, "I can't separate them totally. And yet, uh, there has to be some real clear boundaries because I'm not operating as a therapist when I'm operating as a Dharma Teacher." P1 also stated that a person should not be both a Dharma teacher and a therapist for someone, i.e., the two roles should be separate. Thus, it is not necessarily a difference in the actual practice used to embrace trauma that P1 and P4 are pointing to, but a difference in the social context that the practice is taking place in. For P1 and P4 that means the difference between a Dharma teacher in a sangha setting and a therapist in a therapy room.

P6 described a social context in which there could be some integration of these two settings. He lives in a residential sangha. He stated that he does not provide long-term therapy for sangha members but that he does do one on one mentoring sessions with them and that that could include work on deep level suffering. In this case mentoring means guiding a person through their practice as a more experienced member of the sangha. No money is exchanged, and the process is not usually a long-term one, but overlap between the functions of mentoring and therapy does occur. He also stated that it was possible to do deep work as a group, but that there needed to be some gatekeeping for that to prevent people who are not ready to do deeper work from participating. P6 said that he noticed a phenomenon in the OI sangha in general that there seemed to be two types of people. There are people for whom Buddhist practice means to water the seeds of joy so that they can then embrace deep levels of suffering and there are the "10% happier people" for whom practice means just to water the seeds of joy.<sup>26</sup> He stated that it was necessary to create affinity groups so that the people who wanted to do the deep level work with

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<sup>26</sup> Dan Harris, a former TV news journalist turned mindfulness teacher, wrote a book and created a meditation app called "10% Happier." It is focused on using mindfulness to optimize one's life as opposed to doing deep level trauma work or trying to attain nirvana.

each other could. More will be said below about how to create deep safety in the discussion of the final two questions that ask how Buddhism and trauma therapy can improve on each other.

P5's response to how trauma therapy theory and practice shows up in her Buddhist practice was to talk about how she practices awareness of body sensations during sangha. She does that to feel out what is happening in the sangha in terms of trauma and how she should respond. She described a ceremony where her sangha was listening to the sound of the bell for 108 times.<sup>27</sup> The son of a sangha member was having some anger issues come up. The sangha knew that the father had had anger issues and had successfully worked on it with his own practice. P5 felt activated by the boy's behavior but saw that the father responded well by taking his son for a walk. P5 described the experience as the whole sangha helping the boy metabolize his anger. According to P5,

You know he [the father] just calmly like, takes him [the son] on a walk, brings him back, and umm, what was beautiful at that 108 bell ceremony is that everybody just held the space, and I mean nobody got reactive. The settledness of everybody, including the children, I just, nothing happened from it. It was there, and then it just kind of settled down. And so I don't know, this is what I can think of to answer your question.

P5 was not speaking in Buddhist or trauma therapy language. She was speaking about the practice of the congregation without distinguishing between the two schools of thought. She described a collective ritual of mindfulness that was able to metabolize the suffering of the son. By stating that the sangha has a collective "settledness" she uses a sensation-based adjective to describe the members.

In another story she described how a man spoke inappropriately to his wife during a dharma sharing and how she (P5) used her mindfulness of body sensations and thoughts to assess the

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<sup>27</sup> The OI uses the type of Buddhist bells that are common in East Asian Buddhism. It looks like a bowl sitting on a pillow. A person uses a wooden striker usually covered with some padded fabric to ring the bell with. The practice is to listen to the sound of the bell as a meditation.

event. The man had a history of mental health issues, but he had been working on it for a long time and was a longtime member of the sangha. His wife had been in the sangha for years and was a solid practitioner. According to P5,

P5: [...] when I witnessed that, I could feel my whole body kind of freeze up, and my mind start thinking, “wrong!” [laugh] “no, don’t do that!” “What should I do!?” But we [the 10-20 people in the sangha] just kind of held the space, and she [the wife] could, because she could, she was there and she was handling it, and we kind of moved on, and so we didn’t really address it. And this is one thing, so I could have addressed it later, but I decided not to because I know them both very well, and I decided that it would just get organically...

JF: Right

P5: composted. And I didn’t want to make a thing out of it.

JF: Yeah if it repeated again OK but it felt like it was organically...

P5: I felt like it was a one-time thing and it didn’t send shock waves, it didn’t look like it would reverberate, anyway so, I could be wrong but[...]

At seeing the man speak unskillfully to his partner P5 first describes being aware of unpleasant sensations in her body. Then she describes being aware of emotionally charged thoughts of judgement, the need to stop his behavior, and wondering if she should intervene. Then she describes a shift of her attention to a collective sense of the sangha as a body holding the space and assessing further what is going on. One could say she shifted her awareness from her thoughts back to her body sensations as part of the collective body of the sangha. In retelling the story of her somatic practice in that instance she also brought up her relational history with the people involved in describing her assessment of the situation. Her summary of her assessment combined a tactile sense “it didn’t send shock waves” and the visual sense “it didn’t look like it would reverberate” into an overall sensation-image intuitive gestalt. She then followed that up with an expression of “don’t-know mind” by stating “I could be wrong,” and thus the need for continued assessment of her assessment ability.

### **Questions Five and Six**

**Based on your experience, how can Buddhist theory and practice improve the theory and practice of trauma therapy?**

**Based on your experience, how can trauma therapy theory and practice improve the theory and practice of Buddhism?**

The answers to the final two questions tended to repeat and further clarify themes brought up by the previous questions. The answers also tended to be shorter since these were the final questions of the interview and time was usually running short. In some cases, I asked the final two questions as a pair in one overall question. I will therefore discuss these two questions as one final section to this chapter. The following are the four main themes that emerged from the answers. One, properly using Buddhist meditation practice in trauma therapy sessions improves the work of trauma therapy. Two, there needs to be a popular education model on how the body and mind works, and on practices for recognizing and healing trauma. Three, a crucial teaching from Buddhism for healing trauma is that emotions are made up of sensations and cognitions. Four, specific conditions are required to work on big T or deep trauma.

P4 responded to the question on how Buddhism can improve upon trauma therapy by giving a general statement of how Buddhist meditation practice provides core teachings for her trauma therapy work. According to the exchange between P4 and I,

JF: Based on your experience, how can Buddhist theory and practice improve the theory and practice of trauma therapy?

P4: [pause] Well I think all to say it does. It does by practicing presence, it does by practicing compassion and non-judgement, and it does by having a different map of the human psyche.

If one assumes that P4, as an OI Dharma teacher, is referring to Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings in her answer, then she has succinctly put forward core doctrinal themes of his meditation teachings

to summarize her counseling practice. The practice of presence is based on the sixteen exercises of mindfulness of breathing within the framework of the four establishments of mindfulness. The practices of compassion and non-judgment are part of the “four immeasurables” (*brahmaviharas*) from the Pali Canon which are practices to cultivate loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. Thich Nhat Hanh taught them as different kinds of love that one should practice in relationship to oneself and to others.<sup>28</sup> The different map of the human psyche is the Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses that Thich Nhat Hanh taught.

P1, in describing how she integrated Thich Nhat Hanh’s meditation teachings into her clinical practice, recalled a story about a conference on mindfulness, psychology, and neuroscience that she helped organize in which Thich Nhat Hanh attended. She spoke as a fellow scholar practitioner of the attendees at the conference who were doing research on mindfulness, neuroscience, and psychotherapy. Although she told this story as part of an answer to the earlier question on how she defines trauma using Buddhist language, what she said speaks directly to the question of how Buddhist theory and practice can improve upon trauma therapy. According to P1,

The more we studied and the more we did the brain research, and Dan Siegel and Jack Kornfield and some of the other people that were involved in the conference legitimizing the power of this, this other leg of clinical work. And I would say that it’s just fast-tracked all my work. I mean I can say things that I never would have said before. Like “stop, breathe.” You don’t say that in classical analysis. [small laugh] You don’t say those things. A lot of it was the opening up and the broadening of the psychoanalytic tradition with a lot more focus on the relationship. I became a relational psychoanalyst, with a strong self-psychology orientation, and all of that, so it was changing, a lot of valuable information from infant observation you know influenced my work, and so you know it was all this huge opening. I mean, now I don’t see people on the couch anymore. I feel I can get more done more quickly and more to the point using the practice directly and inviting patients to use the practice in their own lives.

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<sup>28</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *Teachings on Love* (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2002), chap. 1.

As discussed above in P1's Buddhist definition of trauma, she integrated the Freudian understanding of the self and the unconscious with Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on the eight consciousnesses as her overall psychological framework. As can be seen in this quote she also integrated Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on mindfulness of breathing into her therapy practice. Other significant elements she brought in include relational psychology, self-psychology, attachment theory, and interpersonal neurobiology. She sees the integration of these elements into her psychoanalytic practice as part of an overall evolution of her practice, of which Buddhism was another significant part. In general terms, the three legs of her theory and practice are depth psychology, Buddhism, and interpersonal neurobiology. The image that comes to mind is a three-legged stool in which all three legs are necessary for the stool to stand and to be able to hold weight.

In response to these final two questions P 2 & 3 spoke of the need for a popular education model of mindfulness practice and trauma therapy. In other words, they spoke of the need for society to scale up its ability to educate people about trauma and to teach them practices to respond to it. They both used the term "owner's manual" meaning that this education should be provided to all humans as a fundamental teaching on how to be human. The following is P2's response to a follow up question I asked him as to whether or not he thought Buddhism could help trauma therapy scale up. According to P2,

Yeah you know the other day a thought came to mind, and the thought was "you know, there's really no owner's manual for being a human being." And that is so necessary, and it's not something that can be created by a book, there are books that can point to things, and I think that's what a lot of Thay's books do, but ultimately, it's up to us to look for it, and to discover it within ourselves. And I see that that, in a way, is what the practice is about. And the more people, kind of as you said, that we can get engaged in this practice, and it is a practice and people have to realize "hey you know, in order to become proficient at something you have to practice." I don't care whether it's in sports or music or finance or whatever, you have to practice. And so you are important. Not from an ego standpoint but hey, you know, wait a minute, how do you want to live your

life? How do you want others to live their lives? What do you want communities to look like? And bringing the mindfulness practice to more and more people, I feel, will be tremendously beneficial. It doesn't mean that we are all going to think alike and whatever have the same interests, but to me what it does, what it can do, is allow people to make choices that are going to be effective for their lives and the lives of others.

As mentioned in P2's trauma therapy definition of trauma above, he sees trauma as the "bedrock of psychology" and that trauma can manifest as small, medium, and big T trauma. In his response here to how Buddhism and trauma therapy can improve on each other he describes the need for a fundamental experiential learning process via mindfulness practice that all humans should learn. Earlier in the interview during a follow up question to his answer on how Buddhism shows up in his trauma therapy practice P2 stated, "[...] letting go is something that is paramount. And I see that is what's happening in therapy is allowing the people to let go of the mental formations. And as a result, to be in the present moment." He also described mental formations as "habit energies," a term Thich Nhat Hanh often used for mental formations. One could assume then that P2 thinks being able to let go of reactive habit energies via mindfulness practice in order to be in the present moment is critical for a person to be able to get in touch with how they want to live their lives, how they want society to be structured, and how they can choose to go in that direction. Habit energies here can be seen as representing the spectrum of small, medium, and big T trauma.

As mentioned above, P3, like P2, also saw the need for a widescale popular education model that could teach about trauma and practices to respond to trauma. This was a theme that kept coming up for P3 throughout the interview. As mentioned above in her answer on how she defines trauma using Buddhist terminology, she starts out by discussing right effort in the context of the eight consciousnesses. In particular, the need to water positive seeds first before trying to embrace and transform the negative ones. She said she then teaches about trauma using

neuroscience. She compares this knowledge to the knowledge of an owner's manual for a car.

According to P3.

I like to talk to people about, well two things, one is how our nervous system wasn't evolved to live in this kind of situation. And it wasn't evolved to have meaning, purpose, and connection beyond survival. You know you did your thing [i.e., fulfilled your purpose] when you had babies and you raised them to have other babies. And so we are looking at a different sense [of what it means to be human], and we have to evolve our nervous system to meet that challenge. And then I also talk about it in terms of like driving a car. We're not given an owner's manual, we're not given driving lessons, we're not taught about the laws, and we're expected to begin to drive a car before we can reach the pedals. And that's just nuts! So how do we expect not to run into problems? Especially when the world, you're not being asked to drive on a parking lot, you're asked to drive off road. So nobody should be allowed, or at least be aware of when shame comes up it's, it's unnecessary. And we should really try to rest in that understanding that we're, man we're just human. And we're in a horrible situation so how can we make the best of it?

Thus, P3 like P2 also sees the need for a universal education in understanding and responding to trauma. At the beginning of the interview P3 brought up a popular education model for elementary school teachers based on Buddhism and neuroscience that the Dalai Lama developed in partnership with Emory University called Social Emotional and Ethical Learning (SEE Learning).<sup>29</sup> Although it is based on Buddhist principles, the curriculum is taught using the language of secular neuroscience so it can be used in public schools. Although not primarily focused on trauma, it does have a focus on trauma as part of developing emotional and ethical intelligence. She sees the need for this curriculum as a global need if humans are to avoid the complete collapse of organized society via the collapse of the ecosystem. Or, if collapse does occur but some survivors are able to carry on, then this training will be key for their survival and ability to envision a sustainable human society.

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<sup>29</sup> The 14th Dalai Lama, "Unveiling the SEE Learning Curriculum," text/html, The 14th Dalai Lama, June 4, 2019, <https://www.dalailama.com/news/2019/unveiling-the-see-learning-curriculum>; "Home - SEE Learning," accessed July 26, 2021, <https://seelearning.emory.edu/node/5>.

P3 uses Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on the eight consciousnesses as her overall framework but sees the theory and practice of trauma therapy based on neuroscience to be a critical missing element to her Buddhist framework. In the following exchange between us she makes that clear.

JF: OK so next question. Based on your experience, how can trauma therapy theory and practice improve the theory and practice of Buddhism? For example, how could an understanding of trauma help the sangha be able to face certain mental formations better? Could that help?

P3: Absolutely. That's, I find it really difficult to just do Buddhist practice without mentioning how we're made up as human beings. It's become so foundational to anything about my being. That it's just, it's like, there's something missing in the framework. That it's OK, it's necessary to have an embodied experience of all these things. But if you don't know what, if you've never heard the concepts, then it's much harder to make sense of your bodily experience.

To explain her point, she went on to give the example of her being in college and experiencing same-sex attraction for a woman but not having the concept of what it means to be queer. As a result, she was unable to interpret her experience. "You know when I was seventeen or eighteen I had a crush on a woman in my dorm. It took me fifteen years to realize, oh my God! That was a crush! Because I didn't have the concepts to hang it on, it was invisible to me, even though I'd had crushes on guys..." In other words, just as it is fundamental to know about gender and sexual orientation as a human being, P3 sees it as fundamental to know about trauma from the perspective of neuroscience. She happens to frame that culturally within the engaged Buddhism of Thich Nhat Hanh so as a Dharma teacher she teaches it that way. But as a TRM and CRM practitioner she can also just present the trauma therapy theory and practice using neuroscience and secular mindfulness practice.

P5 is a therapist that specializes in interpersonal neurobiology and mindfulness practice; is an MBSR teacher; and is an OI member who co-facilitates a weekly sangha meeting in her therapy office. She said each week she sees about twenty therapy clients, teaches two to four

MBSR classes, and participates in the O.I. sangha. About 30% of her clients come from her MBSR classes. She is not able to take everyone and so refers a number of her MBSR students out. As mentioned above she teaches the four establishments of mindfulness using mindfulness of breathing from Thich Nhat Hanh and the body-scan practice from MBSR as core practices. She teaches the four establishments as body sensation, emotion, thought, and either causes and causes and conditions or don't-know mind. As mentioned above she credits Jon Kabat-Zinn with emphasizing the body-scan practice. She uses Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on the eight consciousnesses as her Buddhist psychology. She stated that one of the hardest things to teach people is that emotions are made up of body sensations and cognitive narrative. In the exchange between us below she starts her discussion of emotion by describing the early Buddhist classification of body sensation as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral sensation.

P5: ...I really make an effort to teach pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral, that framework is the most essential way we feel feelings, and we feel them in our body which is why that conflation of the word feeling [i.e., *vedana*], it's very hard to get that across really. People don't grasp it all that easily.

JF: That Buddhism does make the distinction between body sensation and emotion, yeah most people they just talk about emotion and they can't separate the two things out, like it's

P5: Mmm hmm

JF: Yeah.

P5: But emotion is a body sensation in that most foundational way, pleasant, unpleasant, neutral. In fact I asked Dan Siegel a couple of times, "how come you don't have emotion on your wheel of awareness?" Are you familiar with his "wheel of awareness?"

JF: Mmm hmm

P5: So I teach his wheel of awareness also, actually as a first way into understanding what we're doing with our mind when we do mindfulness meditation, I use that structure that he has of the "wheel of awareness" and umm, so I asked him a few times years ago, that was ten years ago, cause I was teaching it way back then, I said "why don't you have emotion on the wheel?" He goes "why would I have emotion on the wheel?" And I said, "well you're a psychiatrist." [laugh] Emotion is important! And he goes, "but it's not orthogonal" [i.e., it is not statistically independent from other objective phenomena, namely body sensation and cognition]. And I go "OK, oh, that's true." So he said it's within the sixth sense which is inner sensation in the body, as pleasant, unpleasant, neutral, and it's within the mind in mental activity as naming

emotions, and you know emotional thinking, and so I really have, embedded that [in my teaching [...]]It's not easy to teach that.

P6 made the same observation.

P6: ...when a Western person uses a word that means emotion, what they mean is the combination of a body sensation and a tendency to think fearful thoughts or angry thoughts, they're the owner of the thoughts, they're trying to talk about two things at once in an undifferentiated way and that's one of the reasons why it can be complicated. And so umm, yeah so, so that's something when I'm teaching or when I'm writing that I'll often talk about.

As mentioned above, when P3 teaches TRM and CRM the core practice is to break emotion down into body sensations and thoughts, and then to strategically focus on body sensations as a way to be with the emotions. This stability of awareness of emotion as body sensation can then lead to an organic release of trauma. For P3 this is emphasized in her TRM and CRM training which is based on the principles of SE. For P5 this focus on emotion as body sensation and thought comes from the privileging of the body-scan meditation practice in MBSR. For P6 it comes from his own study and practice of Buddhist meditation from Thich Nhat Hanh. As discussed in the previous chapter, GV and SE both state that the crucial distinction to be made in their respective practices is between body sensation and intention/emotion. GV bases this in the teachings on the three and five links of dependent origination whereas SE bases this in the triune model of the brain and the three corresponding instinctual responses.

As discussed above in the answers to the question on how the participants define trauma using the language of trauma therapy, everyone was in agreement that there are a range of trauma symptoms from small t, to medium t, to big T trauma. P4 distinguished between the safe enough level of safety that sanghas can provide for less intense trauma versus the deep safety that can be provided in a therapy room to work on big T trauma. P1 & 4 both stated that they can't separate out the theory and practice of Buddhism and trauma therapy, i.e., they are using

the same theory and practice when they teach Buddhism and when they practice trauma therapy. The main difference then is the social context of the theory and practice. Both P1 & 4 stated that the therapist and the Dharma teacher should not be the same person. P1 also stated that the confidentiality of therapy is also crucial in creating deep safety. P1 makes these points in the exchange between us below, but she also allows for the possibility of the Buddhist tradition evolving so that it can deal with big t trauma.

JF: And that's what I think is really interesting is that like, OK we have a Buddhist community and in theory we should be able to embrace our suffering but in reality, you need an outsider to do that.

P1: I think so, I really do. I mean I think that is part of one of the cornerstones of good therapy is that it is outside the box its offstage its offscreen its private its unreported, confidentiality on every level is so important. That's why we have separate waiting rooms and all that stuff.

[....]

JF: So even if you were a Dharma teacher the people you relate to as a Dharma teacher are different from the people you relate to as a therapist.

P1: Yeah, because as a Dharma teacher you have a certain authority that's different. And as a therapist, really, you're supposed to stay out of the way. It's hard. These are interesting thorny questions because I used to think I shouldn't use any of these tools, that would be sort of like an unfair advantage. But then I realized, wait a minute, we have a lot of research data that mindfulness and meditation are extremely valuable tool to healing. So, you know it is a little bit of a, you know you just have to be awake and self-aware and reflect "is this feeling a little squirrely? Am I getting somewhere that I have to be careful?" and let's look at it. I do that with what it's like to be in my house with my dogs. Some people I lock the dogs up so they don't have to deal with it. It's just too much.

The exchange begins by me making the point that the way to create deep safety in a Buddhist sangha so that trauma can be responded to is to have an outsider be involved so that confidentiality can be assured. P1 agrees with me by stating that that is a cornerstone of the tried-and-true method of therapy. When I probe further by clarifying that a Dharma teacher should not mix who they teach as a Dharma teacher with who they see as a therapist, P1 agrees with that statement by discussing more the difference in roles. But then she reflects on how in the past, she used to think she should not teach mindfulness practice during therapy sessions. She then goes

on to describe a process for how one explores and evolves one's practice as a therapist. The issue boils down to whether or not what is being practiced is beneficial or harmful. As our discussion continued, we spoke of the importance of supervision as part of the process for determining what is beneficial or harmful in counseling practice. But we are speaking about this process as a way for Buddhist sanghas to evolve their practice in responding to trauma.

As discussed above, P6 sees his Buddhist theory and practice as being sufficient for working on all levels of trauma. In addition, he sees the medical model and clinical relationships as being negative. He also spoke about how he offers mentoring sessions for people in his residential sangha in which they can work deep level trauma. In the exchange between us below he discusses how he has integrated the form of experiential psychotherapy into his teaching of Buddhist meditation. He refers to this as "dialogue-based mindfulness training." Later in the exchange I ask him about how deep safety can be created in a sangha setting in terms of confidentiality.

P6: Yeah. Actually the way that Western psychology has changed not how I practice but how I teach, [I teach] "dialogue-based mindfulness training," which is rather than doing a guided meditation in which I'm offering guidance, you're silent, I have no idea how you are interpreting my guidance, and then at the end we check in, [instead I am ] using a model, the way that people do experiential psychotherapy, to teach our practices, which is basically this, so I'll say "OK so in this moment, bring your awareness to your body, notice whatever is there, let me know what you're finding." And then that person will say "yeah it's like tension in my chest." I'll say "OK so now see if you can allow that tension in your chest, just allow it to be there, and let me know what happens when you try." And so it might be it let's go, it might be there's a voice that says "no, I don't want to do that," it might be it gets worse, if it gets worse then I can say "great that's perfect, this is all we're trying to do right now, we're allowing it to be as strong as it wants to be, we're not trying to make it go away" And so what I've found is that I've been able to teach how to actually practice in a much faster way, in a way that I had to learn through long years of trial and error [...] It's just like people, you don't know what you're doing. In fact, if you were trying to be a trauma therapist who had never even read a book about working with people with trauma and you were just trying to wing it based on a one-hour talk, then of course it's not gonna go well. And that's what people are trying to do [with mindfulness practice]. Like they don't know what they're doing, they don't have any real guidance, they listen to a couple of

talks and they're trying to, you know they're trying to drive without any training, or they're surprised that they can't. So for me it's less about learning how to, changing the practice, and more about helping people learn what the practice actually is. Know when they're sort of misapplying it.

[...]

JF: And so then what about, like I know one of the benefits of therapy is that it's a confidential space, it's outside of your normal social circles, so then if there's some intense issues around abuse or whatever, something you don't want people to know about, or if somebody found out about might cause you harm, so it provides this kind of container to work on stuff. So this is what I'm wondering is like in sangha, say we're doing more of this dialogical practice with each other, and say you do get into more deeper intense stuff, how much can be done within a normal sangha context and how much needs to be creating special spaces or having some system? Where maybe you don't work on people in your sangha, but you're connected to another sangha where someone else can help, can help with your sangha. Have you thought about those kind of things?

P6: Well I think different sanghas deal with it differently. At [my residential community] we really try, that anything said in Dharma discussion, like even in just like weekly Dharma discussion, is confidential. Not only do you not repeat it, but you don't approach someone about what they share, because they shared in the circle, and if they're not, if there's no invitation that it's OK to talk with them about this, you just leave it, so I, I don't think it would be that hard.

In his answer above on how trauma therapy theory and practice shows up in his Buddhist teaching, P6 addressed the commonly held belief that mindfulness alone is not sufficient to deal with trauma, or that for certain people mindfulness practice could make their trauma worse. He countered that belief by stating that a weak mindfulness practice is not as good as a strong other kind of practice, but that in his experience, a strong mindfulness practice can deal with any level of suffering. Here in this answer, he speaks about how he uses the dialogical form of experiential psychotherapy to teach Buddhist mindfulness practice. In doing so he describes a way that Buddhist mindfulness practice can be taught that is effective in dealing with intense suffering. He is also again debunking the claim that mindfulness should not be used for trauma by stating that if someone tried to practice trauma therapy based on a few books and talks it would not go well. One can say that P6 is describing what his standards are for Buddhist counseling. In so doing he is also pointing out what he sees as a faulty logic in the argument that mindfulness

should not be used for trauma by stating that the real issue is in the standards of offering counseling.

In addition to the form of dialogue-based mindfulness training in the context of counseling, P6 also discusses the form of Dharma discussion in his residential community. He states that in his community people are able to provide confidentiality for each other which makes it possible to process deep levels of suffering within a group context. In other words, it is possible to create deep safety without having to enlist the help of an outsider. This differs from P4 who stated in her interview that in her experience, weekly non-residential sanghas are not able to maintain confidentiality. This raises the question as to whether a residential sangha can more easily establish confidentiality than a non-residential sangha. P6's answer is supportive of a Buddhist residential community having the sovereignty to recognize and respond to traumatic suffering. He did not speak to the issue of though, of how to deal with trauma caused by abuse of power and authority within the community. Had there been more time in the interview I would have followed up to ask more about how his residential community deals with that. In discussing how communities can embrace and transform their own suffering P3 brought up the practice of "Beginning Anew" that Thich Nhat Hanh taught. Beginning Anew is basically a transformative justice practice in which community members can recognize the positive actions of others, express regret for unskillful actions, express suffering caused by others in the community, and explore the deeper root causes of the suffering. P3, who also lives in a residential community, stated that this is what her community used.

This concludes the discussion of the themes that emerged from the interviews. In the next chapter I will analyze the themes using the theoretical framework of the three modes of

knowledge to mutually critically correlate the OI participant's understanding of Buddhism with their understanding of trauma therapy.

*Chapter Six: A Mutual Critical Correlation of Order of Interbeing Meditation and Trauma Therapy*

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section I mutually critically correlate the OI participants' Buddhist and trauma therapy theory and practice using the theoretical framework of the three modes of knowledge production. First the analysis will focus on how the OI participants' theory and practice is similar to the theory and practice of the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy and how it is different. Particular attention will be paid to what the OI participants add to the dialogue. In the second section of the chapter, I will present short portraits of each of the participants based on how they have integrated Buddhist and trauma therapy theory and practice. In the final section I will present areas that could be further developed in terms of mutual critical correlation between OI theory and practice and trauma therapy theory and practice for the benefit of OI lay and monastic ministers.

**A Mutual Critical Correlation of Order of Interbeing Theory and Practice with Trauma Therapy Theory and Practice in the Context of the Scholarly Dialogue Between Buddhism and Trauma Therapy in the U.S.**

The OI participants integration of Buddhism and trauma therapy is in keeping with the overall hermeneutic trend in the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. That trend has been to import later Buddhist scholastic theory and practice into modern scientific scholastic theory and practice. As discussed in the literature review, the dialogue has mainly imported the Theravada scholastic teachings on *satipatthana* and the three marks of existence from the *Satipatthana Sutta* from the WVM into mainstream trauma therapy theory

and practice. Another main element has been to supplement the Buddhist theory and practice with theory and practice from somatic trauma therapy. Like the dialogue the OI participants have also imported later Buddhist scholastic teachings into modern scientific scholastic theory and practice on trauma therapy. In addition, like the dialogue they have tended to supplement the later Buddhist scholastic teachings with theory and practice from somatic trauma therapy. Unlike the dialogue, the major teaching they have imported is the Mahayana Yogacara teaching on the eight consciousnesses instead of the Theravada scholastic teachings on *satipatthana* and the three marks of existence.

When asked to define trauma using Buddhist language P1, P2, P4, and P5 stated that they had not tried to do that before. But when I presented them with the teachings on the store consciousness and mental formations as seeds in the store consciousness that can arise as sensations, emotions, and cognitive stances, they readily agreed that those teachings on the eight consciousnesses could be used to theorize what trauma is using Buddhist language. In addition, they said that they used those teachings to map what was happening in trauma therapy and that they sometimes offered those teachings to clients when talking about how to work with difficult emotions. P3 offered an initial definition of trauma using the language of the eight consciousnesses. When I asked her to further elaborate, she said she wasn't sure what to say, or that maybe she knew what to say but didn't consciously know it. When I presented my understanding of trauma using the Yogacara language she also readily agreed that it could be used to theorize what trauma is using Buddhist language. When I asked P6 to define trauma using Buddha language he readily used the Yogacara teachings. When I asked him to further elaborate, he was readily able to further elaborate using Yogacara language. His ability to do so more readily as compared to the other participants is because he spent more time at OI

monasteries learning the teachings and practice and because he was more ambivalent about using Western psychiatry and psychology as a therapeutic orientation.

When I asked P1 for her understanding of trauma using Buddhist language she asked me for my understanding. When I presented my understanding, she agreed with it and said she uses Yogacara teachings to map what is happening in therapy. I then probed further to see how she integrated Yogacara theory with psychoanalytic theory. When asked she said she equated the unconscious with the store consciousness and complexes with mental formations. She said that she used her Yogacara teachings to add to her understanding of depth psychology by stating that the store consciousness could contain wholesome mental formations in addition to unwholesome mental formations. Perhaps the most crucial teaching she brought from Yogacara to depth psychology was her belief in Buddha Nature as an innate essential core of goodness that all humans possess. She said that this was crucial in her ability to be with people who have deep developmental trauma that manifests as stubborn and enduring unwholesome patterns of physical, emotional and cognitive behavior. She agreed with me that by being in touch with her Buddha Nature and the Buddha Nature of her client she could have awareness of and equanimity towards intense negative complexes, i.e., mental formations.

P2 was the exception to the rule in that he tended to make use of the Madhyamika teachings on emptiness as his main Buddhist scholastic resource when engaged in therapy sessions as opposed to the Yogacara teachings. He agreed with my understanding of trauma using Yogacara terminology and said that he used the Yogacara teachings to map what was going on in therapy. He said he used the Yogacara teachings to help people recognize and deal with emotions such as anger. But he said that the main thing he was doing in therapy was practicing “signlessness.” For him this meant being completely open to the person he was

listening to and letting go of putting any labels on what the person was saying or doing. In other words, he was trying to be empty and just listen. He correlated this practice of signlessness with Carl Rogers' practice of unconditional positive regard. He expressed having a deep faith in this practice of signlessness in that he didn't try to "diagnose" the person or lead the session into a certain direction. He just tried to be completely present and to fully listen to the person so that the person felt seen and heard.

The overall hermeneutic trend of importing later Buddhist scholastic teaching into modern scientific scholastic teachings was evident in that the participants tended to implicitly frame their experience in existential humanist terms of human development and happiness. They did not speak of human development in traditional Buddhist terms as including favorable rebirth and liberation from rebirth in addition to greater welfare and happiness in the present life. In staying within an existential humanist interpretation of Buddhist scholastic teachings they were in line with Thich Nhat Hanh's own existential humanist interpretation of Buddhist teachings. In other words, the participants offered a faithful reflection of Thich Nhat Hanh's own view of Buddhist teachings. P1 spoke of Buddha Nature as an innate essence of goodness that all humans possess, but she did not contextualize that essence as a spiritual essence that transcends the physical body. P2 spoke of emptiness as an experience where one transcends all of one's concepts about how things are, but he did not speak about that experience as a transcendence that results in liberation from rebirth. P5 spoke about opening up to an experience of "don't-know mind" and of opening up to an experience of "causes and conditions" as an ultimate contextual frame of human experience, but she did not relate those teachings to the traditional Buddhist goal of liberation from rebirth. Thus, in general the participants spoke of experiences of relative transcendence within a naturalistic worldview, i.e., transcendence as understood within the

modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production instead of within the early Buddhist yogic or later Buddhist scholastic mode of knowledge production.

For the most part the participants did not make use of the four establishments of mindfulness as a contemplative structure to ground mindfulness practice with. In general, they spoke of mindfulness of breathing and mindfulness of emotions using the Yogacara framework of the eight consciousnesses. The main exception was P5 who did make substantial use of the four establishments of mindfulness through what she called her “mindful check in” practice. She taught that practice as mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of emotions, mindfulness of thoughts, and mindfulness of the don’t-know mind. She derived the practice of the “don’t-know mind” from Thich Nhat Hanh’s teaching that a practitioner should always ask themselves “are you sure?” so as to better be able to be in touch with what is happening in the present moment as opposed to being caught up in a perception about what is happening in the present moment.

Another way that P5 stood out from the other participants is that she was an MBSR teacher in addition to being an OI member and a psychotherapist. As a result, she had extensive experience teaching the bodyscan practice to students in her MBSR classes and she used principles from MBSR in her therapy practice. Although not mentioned in the previous chapter, at one point in the interview P5 said she wished OI members would all take an MBSR class so that they could make more use of the bodyscan practice and so they could ground their mindfulness teaching more in the body. P5 said that when she teaches the mindful check-in practice, she starts with the body, then adds emotion, then adds thought, and then adds the don’t-know mind. Although not exactly the same, this progression is in keeping with the early Buddhist yogic teachings on the 16 exercises of mindfulness of breathing that more or less follows that same progression. Since Kabat-Zinn appropriated the bodyscan from the GV

lineage, and since GV theory and practice is to a large degree in accord with early Buddhist yogic theory and practice, P5 can be said to be implicitly making use of early Buddhist yogic theory and practice. Again, this is because she privileges mindfulness of body sensations and then progressively adds mindfulness of emotions, thoughts, and a non-conceptual intuitive awareness with the don't-know mind.

Another major similarity between the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. and the way the OI participants integrate Buddhist theory and practice with trauma therapy theory and practice is that they supplement their Buddhist theory and practice with somatic trauma therapy theory and practice and interpersonal neurobiology. In the same way that the WVM has found its *satipatthana* teachings to be lacking when it comes to recognizing and responding to trauma, most of the OI participants felt that their OI Buddhist theory and practice was insufficient in being able to recognize and respond to trauma. P1 stated that she saw (a) depth psychology, (b) Buddhist mindfulness practice and Buddhist psychology, and (c) interpersonal neurobiology as three legs of a stool of integrated theory and practice. In other words, she saw all three as essential and necessary and that they needed each other in order to work. P2 and P4 stated that Buddhist teachings did not explicitly recognize trauma caused by interpersonal abuse and how to respond to it and so therefore trauma therapy theory and practice was needed to fill in that gap. P3 felt that the teachings on the eight consciousnesses and the mental formations as seeds provided an overall framework but that that framework was lacking. She stated that the theory and practice of somatic trauma therapy that she learned from Miller-Karas' TRM and CRM approaches as well as other interpersonal neurobiological research on trauma grounded the Yogacara framework. She felt the neuroscience theory and practice gave fundamental and crucial information on how the body works, what trauma is, and how to heal it.

She felt that it spoke directly to what a person experiences and helps them makes sense of it in a way that the Yogacara teachings could not. P5 stated that she drew heavily from Dan Siegel's understanding of implicit and explicit memory to understand what trauma is and how to respond to it.

P6 was the only percipient who felt that his Buddhist theory and practice was sufficient in and of itself to theorize what trauma is and how to respond to it. He stated that he used neuroscience as a proxy to explain his Buddhist teachings to people who were more receptive to neurological explanations than Buddhist ones. Although I did not ask them directly, none of the participants seemed to be aware of the research of Sujato and Thanissaro on early Buddhism, nor did they seem to be aware of GV theory and practice. In other words, they did not seem to be aware of the more body-centered theory and practice of early Buddhist yogic teachings in terms of the four establishments of mindfulness and the links of dependent origination. It therefore made sense for them to look towards somatic trauma therapy and interpersonal neurobiology as a way to make their OI Yogacara teachings more body-centered and to have specific practices to work with body sensations in relation to trauma.

In addition to making use of Yogacara psychology as a form of Buddhist psychology to theorize about what trauma is, another contribution that the OI participants make to the dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. is examples of them providing Buddhist spiritual care and counseling that recognizes and responds to trauma in Buddhist congregational contexts as opposed to just the social context of therapy sessions. One could say that they provide examples of trauma-therapy-informed Buddhist spiritual care and counseling. P1 said she used trauma therapy theory and practice to be able to recognize what is going on in certain OI congregational contexts such as OI monasteries. In other words, she used her training in

trauma therapy to explain to herself the times when she thought she saw dysfunctional patterns of behavior within a monastic community. P2, P4, and P5 said they did the same when it came to their weekly sangha gatherings. P3 said she did the same when it came to her lay residential community. Again, P6 was the exception in that he would use his Buddhist theory and practice to perform a similar function in his lay residential community.

P2 gave an example of using trauma therapy-informed Buddhist spiritual care to confront a male sangha member who had acted sexually inappropriately with several female sangha members. P3 said she used her trauma therapy training to cultivate more patience with a younger female resident of her lay community who P3 thought had some trauma that she had not yet worked out. P3 said she was overall living in harmony with the community and that she was practicing and so sooner or later she would probably get to working on her deeper issues. P4 made a similar statement about developing patience for one of her weekly sangha members. P5 said she used her trauma therapy training to assess when trauma was activated in her weekly sangha and if she needed to respond to it or not.

P1 and P4 said that they could not really separate their Buddhist theory and practice from their trauma therapy theory and practice. P4 said that when she was teaching the Dharma of offering consultations as a Buddhist minister that she was drawing from both. P1 stated that she felt that deep work on trauma should be done in the context of therapy because it offered a safe container that was confidential and outside a person's normal social circles. P4 stated that she felt weekly sanghas could not offer the deep level of safety needed to work with trauma. She felt that weekly sanghas could only offer a small to medium depth of safety. P6 on the other hand felt that in his residential sangha they were able to create conditions of deep safety in both group contexts and in one-on-one sessions of Buddhist counseling. When pressed on whether a

Buddhist minister could provide Buddhist counseling for trauma provided that deep safety was made available P1 said that this was an interesting and “thorny question” that was worth looking into. One main issue she felt that needed to be addressed is clarification in the role of a Dharma teacher versus a therapist. In summary, one could say that there was general agreement that there needed to be deep safety in order for big T trauma to be dealt with, that the social context of therapy was a tried-and-true container, and that any attempt for Buddhist ministers to deal with trauma in a non-therapy context would require slow, patient, and cautious effort.

### **OI Participants as Mutual Critical Correlators of Buddhism and Trauma Therapy**

P1 mutually critically correlated (a) classic Freudian psychoanalysis, feminist relational psychoanalysis, attachment theory, and an interpersonal neurobiological understanding of implicit and explicit memory with (b) Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses and Buddha Nature, and Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings on mindfulness practice. The main social context that she practiced in was one on one therapy sessions in her home office. During the interview she gave me a tour of her home office which exemplified her as a Buddhist psychotherapist. The following exchange from P1 and I is from that tour.

P1: So you walk in and there are my bells. And they’re tuned to the seven chakras. These are bells from the Gateway Bookstore in Santa Cruz. They were tuned to the seven chakras. So part of the treatment is patients would come in and I would say “what bell would you like for us to begin?” and before they sit down they choose and that’s already telling me what state they’re in. If they need the root chakra for survival, or they need the throat chakra for communication and deep listening, or the popular heart chakra the big one right here, that’s already illuminating. These are beautiful resonant bowls and I basically surround the patient with the reverberation of the bowl. I walk around them so it literally is penetrating the body, literally the body vibrates with the sound of the bell, as you know, when it is a beautiful bell and it’s the big sound. So that’s the first thing and then my altar it right over here so they can certainly see my practice, and they’re welcome in my home so they don’t think I think that they are too icky

JF: [laugh]

P1: I mean some people will deduce “oh you will only see me far away from where live because I’m so awful,” no, that’s not the way it is. And then I have Thay’s [i.e., Thich Nhat Hanh’s] calligraphy all over the place too. Even the bathroom has lots of wonderful calligraphy.

JF: Yeah its really beautiful.

P1: Yeah so I think that’s important, the physical experience. Now here’s an interesting thing I have to show you also, this Buddha, the teaching Buddha with a teaching mudra, this was given to me by my psychoanalytic mentor who lived to be 104.

JF: Wow

P1: So she basically taught me psychoanalysis but also had a very deep practice of her own, not necessarily Buddhist but she recognized that that is what I had, she studied with Krishnamurti, and Thay is here in the room with us. [dog bark] So I think that all permeates without any words what’s being talked about, it permeates the patient’s consciousness and is very healing.

As mentioned above, P1’s faith that everyone has an essential core of goodness that is their Buddha Nature is central to the work she does as a Buddhist therapist working on deeply rooted trauma in her clients. At the time of the Buddha, it was customary for monastics and lay practitioners to circumambulate the Buddha three times in a clockwise direction with their right shoulder bared as a sign of respect and as a way of receiving blessings. When the Buddha’s body was cremated and his relics placed in a stupa, it became customary for Buddhists to circumambulate the stupa in a clockwise direction. By having a Buddha statue, calligraphies and ritual bells in her home office, and by circumambulating her clients, P1 can be said to be recognizing and honoring the Buddha Nature of her clients.

P2 mutually critically correlated Thich Nhat Hanh’s Madhyamika teachings on signlessness—teachings synonymous with emptiness—with Carl Rogers’ person-centered psychology based on the practice of unconditional positive regard. P2 has deep faith that just by being present and open to his counselee, by truly listening to them without applying any labels onto them, that that allowed the person to feel like they were being truly seen and heard. Like Rogers, P2 has faith that when a person is truly seen and heard they will naturally grow into more wholeness and happiness. P2 said he did not like to see himself as a “therapist” and he did

not like to see the person he was listening to as a “client.” Instead, he preferred to see himself and the other person as just two humans sitting in a room together talking and listening. P2 can be said to be meditating on emptiness in which the emptiness is a fullness of humanity being expressed and received. His years of mindfulness practice has provided him with the capacity to offer that space of healing listening.

P3 mutually critically correlated the Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses with somatic trauma therapy. In particular Levine’s SE via Miller Karas’ TRM and CRM approach. P3 stated that she is no longer that interested in doing individual therapy and is instead interested in doing group workshops. This is because she feels that society as a whole is traumatized and that that is what is leading to global warming and the impending collapse of society. She therefore feels that humans as a collective need to engage in a somatic approach to healing from our trauma. She feels that there needs to be popular education programs to teach people the fundamentals of how their body and mind works in terms of neuroscience, trauma, and instinctual drives. She has described the need as a need for an owner’s manual on how to be human in the same way that when a person buys a car it comes with an owner’s manual on how to use it. She feels that one on one therapy in which a person works on every nook and cranny of their individual trauma is too time, labor, and resource intensive given the global need for humans to be able to collectively recognize and respond to our collective trauma. For her personally this collective approach also manifests by her being Buddhist and living in a lay residential Buddhist community where the whole community is practicing mindfulness to collectively heal and grow.

P4 mutually critically correlated Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses and OI teachings on mindfulness practice with feminist Jungian Depth Psychology and somatic trauma

therapy. The Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses gave her an overall phenomenological map to provide therapy with. Her practice of mindfulness of breathing, the body, emotions, and thoughts allowed her to become deeply attuned with her client and to be in touch with her intuitive mind in terms of knowing what is happening and how to respond. Her background in feminist Jungian depth psychology gave her an awareness of the widespread prevalence of trauma in society that she did not get from Buddhism. Her training in somatic trauma therapy approaches strengthened her ability to recognize and respond to trauma.

Although not mentioned in the interview, P4 has developed multiday retreats for groups of women for whatever reason are childless at midlife. This could be from abortion miscarriage, stillbirth, or the death of a child. In the workshops she uses drawing, journaling, movement, sharing, and ritual practices for the women to collectively recognize and grieve not being able to fulfill desires they may have had with regards to motherhood. P4 said it is a rite of passage for women to enter into the latter half of their life cycle. She said she draws from Buddhist rituals in Japan who focus on Jizo Bodhisattva, a patron saint for the souls of children and babies who died.

P5 mutually critically correlated Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses and Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on the four establishments of mindfulness with MBSR theory and practice as well as Dan Siegel's understanding of trauma in terms of implicit and explicit memory. Because when she teaches MBSR the bodyscan is the main practice, and because she takes such a body-centered approach to offering therapy, P5 gave me the impression of being more of a yogic teacher focusing on the somatic dimension of trauma than a psychotherapist focusing on the psychological dimension of trauma. This is not to say that she did not express empathy and significant support for people to accept and be with their emotions. But her view

that emotions are “thought distortion generators” and that emotions are made up of body sensations and cognitive narrative gave her a certain grounding in the body and in intuitive awareness that felt to me more yogic than psychological. As such I see her as a Buddhist yogic depth counselor and that her mutual critical correlation of Buddhism and trauma therapy is most similar to my own as compared to the other OI participants.

P6 mutually critically correlated Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses and Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings on compassion with computational neuroscience and biological research into the primary emotions of mammals. He more than any other participant relied on the eight consciousnesses as his map to theorize what trauma is and how to respond to it. Whether working as a therapist or as a Buddhist teacher engaged in dialogue-based mindfulness practice his main focus was on practicing mindfulness of what was arising in the present moment and if suffering was present, to allow compassion to arise and be expressed towards that suffering. He stated that compassion and play were the two primary wholesome emotions that mammals experience and he felt that compassion was the energy that made counseling work. Thus, instead of having a counselee focus on neutral to pleasant sensations as a resource in therapy to cultivate stability or as a home base to go back to when activated, he had them focus on an object of compassion such as the image of a puppy or of a cherished loved one. P6 had the most extensive training in OI monasteries as compared to the other participants. He was the most skeptical of the medical model of Western psychology and psychiatry and the most willing to use Buddhist theory and practice to base his counseling practice on. Based on his experience of living in a Buddhist residential community he was also the most willing to explore how Buddhist communities could work together to heal their own trauma.

### **Areas of Further Development for Lay OI Ministers**

The greatest potential for future development within the OI in terms of integrating trauma therapy theory and practice into OI theory and practice is the use of the Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses as a Buddhist body-centered depth psychology. Based on the interview with P1 it appears clear that the eight consciousnesses can serve as a map of the conscious and unconscious that is on par with the map of the conscious and unconscious from depth psychology. In addition, based on the interview with P1 and P5 it appears evident that the teachings on the eight consciousnesses can clearly map implicit and explicit memory in the same way that Siegel has done with his research into interpersonal neurobiology. Therefore, OI lay and monastic Dharma teachers should feel encouraged to use their Yogacara psychology to be able to recognize and respond to trauma. In order to do this, they would need to reverse the hermeneutic trend of the dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. Instead of importing later Buddhist scholastic teachings into modern scientific scholastic teachings, they would need to import modern scientific scholastic teachings into later Buddhist scholastic teachings. In other words, instead of trying to engage in Buddhist-informed trauma therapy, they would need to engage in trauma-therapy-informed Buddhist trauma counseling. Instead of earning degrees in psychology at Western academic universities and colleges, they would need to develop their own Buddhist ministry training programs that could be taught at OI monasteries, lay residential communities, and or local lay congregations. In other words, the OI would need to develop its own formal seminary with its own formal curriculum to train Buddhist ministers.

Such a training program would reverse the current trend of how trauma therapists are trained in the U.S. Instead of psychology programs that appropriate theory and practice from Buddhism, an OI seminary or seminaries could offer Buddhist ministry programs that

appropriate theory and practice from trauma therapy. In addition to teaching theory, such training programs would also need to offer the equivalent of clinical training. The most obvious model in the U.S. for this would be Clinical Pastoral Education that is offered by the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) in order for trainees to become board-certified chaplains. The OI could develop its own version of CPE and its own version of what it means to be certified as a Buddhist minister who can offer Buddhist trauma counseling. Monasteries and lay residential centers could open Buddhist counseling centers that offer one-on-one and group counseling services. In the beginning, OI members who are psychotherapists could be in charge of supervising clinical practice. As their clinical wisdom became integrated into the OI later generations of Buddhist ministers could then be in charge of clinical training but as Buddhist ministers instead of as psychotherapists.

Another area of potential future development is for the OI to engage in a project of educating itself in terms of where Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism fit within other Theravada and Mahayana traditions. If, for example, the OI could hold conferences where scholar practitioners from the Thai Forest, GV, Gelugpa, and Kagyu traditions of Buddhism could attend, there could be a deep exchange of theory and practice between these traditions that would allow for even greater empowerment of OI lay and monastic ministers. For example, if the OI were to learn about early Buddhist yogic teachings from Ajhan Sujato, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, and GV representatives, it could integrate their more body-centered approaches to *satipatthana* practice and their use of the links of dependent origination as a core theory behind *satipatthana* practice. This would provide the OI with a strong basis of Buddhist theory and practice that it could then use to appropriate somatic trauma therapy theory and practice from SE. The combination of Yogacara psychology and Thai-Forest/GV *satipatthana*

practice could be the Buddhist equivalent of a relational depth psychology combined with a somatic trauma therapy.

Perhaps the main obstacle to the OI being able to develop a ministry of Buddhist spiritual care and counseling that can recognize and respond to trauma would be if it was not willing to become agnostic when it comes to belief in rebirth and liberation from rebirth. In other words, to give their Yogacara teachings its full weight of authority, to be able to integrate early Buddhist yogic teachings on the links of dependent origination and *satipatthana* practice, and to give those teachings their full weight of authority, the authority the OI has given to the modern scientific mode of knowledge production would have to be lessened. Perhaps the best way for the OI to do this would be to take a pragmatic approach in which the worldviews behind the early Buddhist yogic, later Buddhist scholastic, and modern scientific scholastic modes of knowledge production are all held lightly, and the main focus is on the applied theory and practice. In other words, one could let go of believing whether rebirth is true or not in order to make use of the teachings on the links of dependent origination. One could let go of believing whether the GV goal of liberation from rebirth is true or not in order to make use of its application of the links in the practices of mindfulness of breathing and the bodyscan. The OI could make an overall commitment in its Buddhist ministry to support individuals, families, congregations, and societies to keep the five precepts. By developing Buddhist counseling centers, it could actually find out if people are breaking the precepts or having the precepts being broken against them and respond to these situations with a trauma-informed Buddhist program of spiritual care and counseling.

If the OI were to develop a Buddhist ministry that could use trauma-therapy-informed Buddhist theory and practice to recognize and respond to trauma, perhaps the greatest challenge

it would face is how to recognize and respond to trauma using a religious popular education model. This brings us back to Herman's axiomatic position that it takes a sociopolitical movement for a society to be able to recognize and respond to trauma. So far in the U.S., the main proponents to collectively recognize and respond to trauma has been members of the women's liberation movement such as Herman via the institutions of higher education and of the healthcare system. Another group has been mental health professionals working with veterans. Even though Thich Nhat Hanh taught that Yogacara psychology could be used to recognize and respond to deep internal formations of suffering, he did not speak about the widespread prevalence of trauma in society caused by interpersonal abuse. He did not call for a collective Buddhist liberation movement to recognize and respond to trauma caused by interpersonal abuse. In addition, he did not advocate for his monks and nuns to learn the theory and practice of trauma therapy, integrate it into their Buddhist practice, and then engage in Buddhist counseling with each other and with retreatants who came to the monastery. The women's liberation movement in the U.S. has been able to institutionalize trauma therapy within the context of individual therapy. In other words, it is possible for a person to be able to go to a therapist for the explicit purpose of healing from trauma caused by interpersonal abuse. But U.S. society as a whole has not collectively acknowledged the widespread prevalence of trauma caused by interpersonal abuse.

If the OI were to engage in a popular education campaign to raise awareness about trauma and how to respond to it using trauma therapy-informed Buddhist theory and practice it would first have to find a way to do this within its own monasteries, lay residential communities, and weekly lay sanghas. If it were to engage in such a campaign that was feasible in terms of the time, money, and resources it would take, it would have to go beyond the medical model of one-

on-one trauma therapy that costs \$100 to \$200 an hour. P3's experience leading TRM and CRM workshops for groups, P5's experience of teaching MBSR classes, and P6's experience of engaging in collective healing using Buddhist theory and practice within a residential community could all serve as starting points for how to proceed. P1 and P4's understandings of what deep safety means in order to work with big T trauma would also be essential theory and practice to include.

## **Conclusion**

There was general agreement among the participants that trauma is the result of an overwhelming experience or series of overwhelming experiences that a person's body and mind has not metabolized yet. There was general agreement that the unmetabolized trauma can manifest as symptoms that have a spectrum of intensity from small, to medium, to big T trauma. There was general agreement that the Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses can be used to theorize what trauma is. A common theme among several participants was that the Yogacara teachings needed to be supplemented with theory and practice from somatic trauma therapy based on interpersonal neurobiology. Two of the participants stated that Buddhism did not explicitly recognize trauma so that even if Yogacara teachings could theorize what trauma is, there still needed to be a sociopolitical context within Buddhism that acknowledged trauma caused by interpersonal abuse. Relatedly, there needed to be deep safety established for big T trauma to be recognized and dealt with. Some participants felt that therapy with a therapist was the best way to create deep safety to work with bit T trauma. Others felt that deep safety could be provided in a workshop setting and or a residential congregational setting. Two of the participants felt that the fundamentals of knowing what trauma is and how to deal with it should be a required education on how to be human and thus advocated for a popular education program

to accomplish that goal. Several of the participants said they use their trauma therapy theory and practice to recognize and respond to trauma in their Buddhist congregational contexts.

There appears to be significant correlation between the Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses and the theory of depth psychology. The store consciousness is similar to the unconscious. The mind consciousness is similar to the conscious mind. The afflicted consciousness is similar to the ego. Mental formations are similar to complexes. There also appears to be significant correlation between the Yogacara understanding of how mental formations can arise as the body, sensations, emotions, perceptions, mental phenomena, and cognitive narratives from the store consciousness and how implicit and explicit memory can arise from the psyche. In other words, the Yogacara teachings on mental formations are very similar to Dan Siegel's understanding of implicit and explicit memory.

Although I never explicitly asked the participants whether or not they believed in the possibility of rebirth and liberation from rebirth, that topic never came up in the interviews. Although I mentioned from time to time the teachings on the links of dependent origination, when I did so the participant who I brought it up to did not respond by stating that they were familiar with those teachings and that they made use of them. No participant brought up the teachings on the links on their own. Although I mentioned the teachings on the four establishments of mindfulness from time to time, when I did so the participant said they may use those teachings to ground themselves during therapy sessions but that those teachings were not a central focus for their practice or for what they taught their therapy clients. The exception to this was P5 who made the four establishments a central focus of her teaching of MBSR and of providing therapy through what she called her "mindful check-in." However, she did not contextualize those teachings with the early Buddhist yogic teachings on the 16 exercises of

mindfulness of breathing or the teachings on the links of dependent origination. P3 made significant use of the SE teachings on cultivating awareness of and equanimity towards body sensations in order to let go of reactive emotions and metabolize trauma. Thus, it was through SE that she was engaging in theory and practice that resembled the links of dependent origination. In general, one could say that there was implicit early Buddhist yogic theory and practice in some of the participants theory and practice, but they had not been exposed to those teachings to make it explicit.

A common trend among the participants was that they were using the same integrated theory and practice of Buddhism and trauma therapy regardless of the social context they were working in. In other words what they taught their therapy clients was what they taught their workshop clients, was what they taught their Buddhist meditation students, was what they taught their fellow OI congregation members. The language they used may differ according to the context but in terms of how they saw what they were doing, how they mapped what they were doing, and how they actually engaged in teaching/providing therapy, it was the same. They modulated what they were doing based on the intensity of the trauma they were dealing with, the level of safety they could establish, and the goal they were trying to achieve, but the integrated theory and practice they were drawing from was the same. Thus, the therapy session was similar to a meditation session. The congregational setting had elements of the therapy room. Their roles as a Dharma teacher and as a therapist were fluid. As a number of them mentioned, they themselves could not separate the two. As such, they can be said to have laid groundwork in which the modern scientific scholastic theory and practice of trauma therapy can be integrated into early Buddhist yogic and later Buddhist scholastic theory and practice as a living religious tradition of Buddhist ministers leading Buddhist congregational practice to embrace suffering.

### *Chapter Seven: Conclusion*

In the first section of this chapter, I present a summary restatement of the research problem and the main findings of this dissertation. As part of that presentation, I discuss what the core contributions of this dissertation are to the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. In the second section of this chapter, I present the contributions this dissertation makes to the fields of practical and pastoral theology in the U.S. In the third section I present a matrix of early Buddhist yogic and later Buddhist scholastic teachings using the framework of Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT) to introduce a prototypical model of Buddhist spiritual care counseling. In the final section of this chapter, I present areas of further research I intend to undertake based on the research of this dissertation.

#### **Summary Restatement of the Research Problem and Main Findings, and Contributions to the Scholarly Dialogue Between Buddhism and Trauma Therapy in the U.S.**

The scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. has mainly been between the WVM and the field of trauma therapy. The hermeneutic trend has been to import the Theravada scholastic teachings on the four establishments of mindfulness (*satipatthana*) into the modern scientific scholastic theory and practice of trauma therapy based on the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and interpersonal neuroscience. The WVM *satipatthana* teachings in the dialogue are an existential humanist interpretation of the Burmese Mahasi *vipassana* teachings on *satipatthana*. The WVM teaches mindfulness of the body, feelings, and mind within the *Dhammic* context of the teachings on the three marks of existence. The WVM teaches the three marks by stating that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent, suffering when attached to, and not self. These teachings tend to be presented within a naturalistic

worldview, i.e., the worldview of scientific materialism. The scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy has argued that the WVM *satipatthana* teachings are insufficient in their ability to recognize and respond to trauma and that it has therefore been necessary to integrate theory and practice from somatic trauma therapy into WVM teachings and WVM teacher training. SE has been one of the main somatic trauma therapy theories and practices that the WVM has turned to because of its body wisdom via the polyvagal theory and its sophisticated somatic practices of resourcing, pendulation, and titration.

The scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. has stated that Buddhist mindfulness meditation is useful in trauma therapy in terms of helping clients develop affect regulation, metacognitive awareness, and existential insight. A central insight has been to use WVM teachings to help clients distinguish between unavoidable pain that comes with life and conditioned reactions to that pain that can, with practice, be let go of. Another insight is the insight of no self which is attained being able to rest in a non-dual awareness that does not discriminate between internal and external experience. Another insight is the insight of impermanence which is seen as the ability to face change and mortality. Another insight is the insight into interdependence in which a person contemplates their material and psycho-social interdependence with the world around him/her/their self within a worldview of naturalism.

The dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. has left out the early Buddhist teachings on the links of dependent origination even though there is substantial correlation between those teachings and the way SE formulates the polyvagal theory and applies it in practice. Both GV and SE theory speak of being caught in a repeating cycle in which a person is overwhelmed by intense body sensations and reactive emotions which lead to the person acting out in a way that perpetuates the cycle of suffering/trauma instead of metabolizing

it. The dialogue has left out the practice of GV even though it has substantial correlation with the practice of SE. GV teaches a practice of establishing stability by keeping the five precepts and by practicing mindfulness of breathing. SE teaches a practice of establishing stability by working with the client to not act out on negative habit patterns in their daily life and by the practices in SE sessions of social engagement and resourcing. GV teaches the metabolization of suffering by practicing the bodyscan, cultivating awareness of and equanimity towards body sensation, and releasing or letting go of present and past reactive intentions/emotions. SE teaches the metabolization of trauma by practicing pendulation and titration in order to uncouple the sensation of the immobility response from the reactive emotions that arise from the immobility response. This results in an organic unwinding or completion of the immobility response.

The main difference between GV and SE is the social context of practice and the goal of practice. In GV the social context is intensive meditation retreats where the practitioner is engaged in intra-personal practice. In SE the social context is SE sessions where the therapist and client are engaged in interpersonal practice. The goal of GV is to uproot the ten fetters in order to realize *nibbana*. The goal of SE is to metabolize trauma in order to restore balance to the nervous system and promote human flourishing under existential humanist terms. If GV and SE theory and practice were integrated there could be an ecosystem of practice that could include counseling sessions and meditation retreats. There could also be an integrated map of trauma that ranged from the small, medium, and big T trauma that occurs within the everyday psychological realm of human experience to the deep t trauma that occurs within the radical transcendent realm of human experience.

The scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. has not yet included the Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses. In addition, it has mainly focused

on empowering therapists to make use of Buddhist-informed trauma therapy instead of empowering Buddhist ministers to make use of trauma-therapy-informed Buddhist spiritual care and counseling. The Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses appears to be fully capable of theorizing what trauma is. It also appears to be fully capable of being used as a Buddhist body-centered relational depth psychology that can distinguish between implicit and explicit memory. If this Yogacara psychology was combined with the early Buddhist yogic teachings on the links of dependent origination and the four establishments of mindfulness via the 16 exercises of mindfulness of breathing, Buddhist ministers could have the equivalent of a relational body-centered depth psychology combined with a somatic trauma therapy approach. This combination would be in keeping with current recommendations for best practice within the field of trauma therapy in general.

In summary the main contribution this dissertation makes to the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy in the U.S. is to point out that so far it has mainly consisted of scholar practitioners using the modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production to import Theravada scholastic *satipatthana* teachings into existential humanist Buddhism and trauma therapy for the benefit of WVM Dharma teachers and Buddhist-informed psychotherapists. It has left out the traditional Buddhist worldview, theory, practice, and goals of the early Buddhist yogic mode of knowledge production and the later Buddhist scholastic mode of knowledge production. As a result, the dialogue has only been able to recognize small, medium, and big T trauma of the everyday psychological realm and it has not been able to recognize the deep t trauma of the radical transcendent realm. In addition, the dialogue has not been able to empower Buddhist ministers to use Buddhist theory and practice to recognize and respond to all four levels of trauma. To correct for these omissions the dialogue could start by

including scholar practitioners, both monastic and lay, from the Thai Forest tradition, the OI, and the GV tradition. In addition, the dialogue could support the development of Buddhist practical and pastoral theology programs for the training of Buddhist ministers. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss how other Buddhist traditions could be included into the dialogue and for what reasons, but one would assume that there are probably other significant correlations between the theory and practice of those traditions and the theory and practice of trauma therapy.

### **Contributions to the Fields of Practical and Pastoral Theology**

The main contributions this dissertation makes to the fields of practical and pastoral theology are the theoretical framework of the three modes of knowledge production and the simple fact that this is one of the few dissertations so far in practical and pastoral theology written by a Buddhist scholar-practitioner. The three modes of knowledge production provide an alternative and possibly complementary theoretical framework to a commonly use framework by contemporary practical/pastoral theologians. The U.S.-based Society of Pastoral Theology (SPT) is comprised of progressive practical and pastoral theologians. By progressive I mean that its members tend to be liberal or leftist in terms of politics and that they are motivated by a strong ethos of liberation against racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, religions discrimination, and other forms of oppression. A theoretical framework that has been developed within the SPT is the *four paradigms of pastoral theology*. The four paradigms provide a four-phase history of the tradition of Christian pastoral theology and a way to see how all four of those phases can be active in contemporary theory and practice of pastoral care and counseling (i.e., spiritual care and counseling). The four paradigms are the *classical paradigm*, the *clinical paradigm*, the *communal contextual paradigm*, and the *intercultural paradigm*.

The classical paradigm, also referred to as the *clerical paradigm*, covers the pre-modern era of Catholic and Protestant Christianity up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This paradigm centers the priest as the provider of pastoral care and counseling. The core functions are for the priest to administer the sacraments, provide religious education, oversee rites of passage, and promote adherence to an ethical code of conduct. The overall pre-Enlightenment goals of this paradigm are to promote living a faithful Christian life and to grant admission into heaven via the sacraments. Within post-Enlightenment liberal Protestant Christianity, the belief in an afterlife and the goal of admittance into heaven started to give way to a naturalist worldview that saw Jesus in more humanistic terms instead of in soteriological terms. The goal shifted to a certain degree towards greater social harmony on Earth as opposed to admittance into heaven. It is beyond my area of expertise to define these shifts in detail other than to say that the groundwork was laid for the emergence of the clinical paradigm of pastoral theology to manifest in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The clinical paradigm emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Practical and pastoral theologians in the U.S. integrated theory and practice from psychology, anthropology and other academic fields into the theory and practice of pastoral care and counseling. One example is James Fowler (1915-2015) integrating the of stages of human development from developmental psychology into the curriculum of religious education in mainline liberal Protestantism.<sup>1</sup> Another example is Howard Clinebell (1922-2005) integrating psychotherapy theory and practice into pastoral counseling.<sup>2</sup> Some mainline Protestant ministers specialized in pastoral counseling and provided long-term counseling to clients in private practices outside of the person's congregation. Another example is practical theologian Don Browning (1934-2010) integrating sociological research into

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<sup>1</sup> James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: HarperOne, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing & Growth*, ed. Bridget Clare McKeever (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011).

human communities into the study of Christian congregations and the development of Christian social ethics.<sup>3</sup> The goal of the clinical paradigm is the individual self-realization of each Christian by successfully going through the stages of human development, healing psychological wounds, becoming a responsible member of society, and achieving an overall state of wholeness and wellbeing within one's self, one's family, and in one's society. The worldview is naturalism. The priest seeks to help Christians achieve these goals as a minister at a church and or as a private pastoral counselor.

The communal contextual paradigm emerged towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It emerged from the civil rights movement, the women's liberation movement, the queer liberation movement, and, to a certain degree, socialist class liberation struggle. Instead of focusing on the individual priest supporting the individual development of each member of the congregation, the communal contextual paradigm focused on the individual as an interconnected web of relationships and focused on the congregation as the caregiver and care receiver. The function of the priest is to facilitate communal contextual growth and development. Examples of publications from the communal contextual paradigm include Archie Smith on Black congregations engaged in the civil rights work, Bonnie Miller-McLemore on feminist pastoral care and counseling, Larry Graham (1942-2017) on an eco-social relational view of self and community, and Elaine Graham on postmodern practical and pastoral theology that includes a queer feminist perspective of identity and social ethics.<sup>4</sup> A core tenant of the communal contextual paradigm is that the Catholic and Protestant Christian tradition has carried within it

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<sup>3</sup> Don Browning, *Fundamental Practical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Archie Smith, *The Relational Self: Ethics & Therapy from a Black Church Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1982); Bonnie Miller-McLemore, "The Living Human Web: Pastoral Theology at the Turn of the Century," in *Through the Eyes of Women: Insights for Pastoral Care*, ed. Jeanne Stevenson Moessner (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 9–26; Elaine L. Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1996); Larry Kent Graham, *Care of Persons, Care of Worlds: A Psychosystems Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).

white-hetero-patriarchal patterns of oppression that need to be radically challenged and transformed. Thus, progressive practical and pastoral theologians engaged in the communal contextual paradigm seek to transform the tradition of Christianity from within.

The intercultural paradigm emerged at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It integrates theory and practice from postcolonial thinkers such as the work of Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire.<sup>5</sup> Practical and pastoral theologian Emmanuel Lartey has been one of the main developers and proponents of the intercultural paradigm.<sup>6</sup> One of the main principles of the paradigm is that post-Enlightenment Catholic and Protestant theology emerged with colonialism and that therefore Catholic and Protestant practical and pastoral theology needs to transform the negative colonial patterns of theory and practice that are within it. One way of doing this is for Christians in former colonial territories such as in Africa to reconnect to indigenous religions and to creatively synthesize Christian theory and practice with indigenous African religious theory and practice. This challenges the Christian normative claim that it should be the one and only way to grant salvation from original sin. In addition, within progressive forms of Christianity, the epistemology tends to be based in scientific materialism and should therefore be put into creative tension with indigenous epistemologies that do not fit within a materialist worldview.

The call from the intercultural paradigm to take indigenous religions and their non-materialist epistemologies seriously puts the intercultural paradigm in tension with the clinical and communal contextual paradigms which have relied on theory and practice from academic

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<sup>5</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (Berkeley, Calif.: Grove Press, 2008); Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *In Living Color: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling* (London ; New York: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 1997); Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *Postcolonializing God: An African Practical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2013).

schools of thought grounded in scientific materialism. In other words, proponents of the clinical and communal contextual paradigms have used the modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production to challenge the authority of truths claims made from the classical paradigm of Christian pastoral theology which is based on Christian Catholic scholastic doctrine. For example, theologian and philosopher Grace Jantzen (1948-2006) used theory from Freudian psychoanalysis to critique the Christian scholastic doctrines of original sin, that earthly embodied life is a fallen state, and that the goal of life should be otherworldly salvation in a heavenly realm.<sup>7</sup> She argued that this is a misogynistic doctrine obsessed with death. She argued that instead of seeking otherworldly salvation, Christianity should support embodied relationship and that the goal should be human flourishing under naturalistic terms. One could say that she is arguing for the replacement of the classical Christian scholastic mode of knowledge production for a modern scientific Christian scholastic mode of knowledge production.

The theoretical framework of the three modes of knowledge production developed for this dissertation could be used place the four paradigms of pastoral theology into a more historically grounded relationship with each other. The later Buddhist scholastic mode of knowledge production can be seen as being roughly equivalent to classical/clerical paradigm of pastoral theology. The modern scholastic scientific mode of knowledge production can be seen as the home of the clinical and communal contextual paradigms of pastoral theology. The early Buddhist yogic mode of knowledge production suggests that perhaps there is an early Christian yogic mode of knowledge production that should be recognized as previous to and distinct from the classical/clerical scholastic mode of later Christianity.

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<sup>7</sup> Grace M Jantzen, "Feminism and Flourishing: Gender and Metaphor in Feminist Theology," *Feminist Theology* 4, no. 10 (1995): 81–101.

As will be discussed in the section below on future research, I believe that a *fourth* mode of knowledge production could be added *before* the early Buddhist yogic mode that could tentatively be called the *village shamanic mode of knowledge production*. This provides the space to explore what the mode of knowledge production was in northeast India before the second urbanization and the emergence of Buddhism. Thus, in neutral terms we could speak of *four modes of knowledge production*, namely the *village shamanic*, the *city-state yogic*, the *clerical scholastic*, and the *modern scientific scholastic*. The intercultural paradigm of pastoral theology could be seen as inclusive of all four of these modes of knowledge production. Instead of seeing the classical/clerical paradigm as inclusive of all pre-Enlightenment Christianity, it could be seen as starting with the appropriation of Christianity by the Roman Empire and the development of Saint Augustine of Hippo's (345-430 CE) scholastic Christian doctrine after an earlier more yogic form of Christianity. Before delving into this discussion of possible future research I will now present a prototypical Buddhist model of spiritual care and counseling that can use Buddhist theory and practice to recognize and respond to all four levels of trauma.

### **A Prototypical Model of Buddhist Spiritual Care and Counseling**

During the coursework phase of my PhD at Claremont School of Theology (CST) I took a class at University of the West from the then chair of the psychology department Hiro Sasaki on third-wave behavioral psychotherapy approaches. One of the approaches was Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), developed in large part by psychologist Steven Hayes.<sup>8</sup> I immediately saw that ACT could serve as a matrix for me to organize different elements of Buddhist theory and practice with and to apply that theory and practice as a Buddhist minister

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<sup>8</sup> Steven C. Hayes, Kirk D. Strosahl, and Kelly G. Wilson, *Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: The Process and Practice of Mindful Change* (New York: Guilford Press, 2011).

offering Buddhist counseling. As part of my PhD at CST I underwent three years of supervised clinical training in spiritually integrated psychotherapy at The Clinebell Institute, the counseling center associated with the school. I used that time to develop this prototypical model of Buddhist counseling.

The goal of ACT is to support therapy clients to develop greater “psychological flexibility” and to reduce “psychological rigidity.” Psychological flexibility is broken down into six core interrelated processes. Psychological rigidity is the flipside of those six processes. I mutually critically correlated those six processes with six core elements of Buddhist theory and practice to develop my model of what I call “Buddhist ACT.” I will present my model of Buddhist ACT by presenting one-by-one an ACT process of psychological flexibility, its flipside of psychological rigidity, and then the correlated Buddhist wholesome element as well as the correlated Buddhist unwholesome flipside element. Each Buddhist element will be grounded in traditional texts and practices. The discussion of the ACT elements will be based on ACT therapist Russ Harris’ book *ACT Made Simple: An Easy-To-Read Primer on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy*.

One of the ACT processes of psychological flexibility is “Contact with the Present Moment” which Harris summarizes as “Be Here Now.”<sup>9</sup> The flipside is “Dominance of the Conceptualized Past and Future,” which Harris summarizes as “Limited Self-Knowledge.”<sup>10</sup> With this process the therapist works with the client to learn how to be in the present moment as a direct experience as opposed to being caught up in thoughts about the past or the future. In other words, the therapist helps the client be in touch with what is going on in the present in

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<sup>9</sup> Russ Harris and Steven C. Hayes, *ACT Made Simple: An Easy-To-Read Primer on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2009), 15.

<sup>10</sup> Harris, 32.

terms of their body, emotions, thoughts, and sensory experience. The therapist also helps the client recognize when they have lost touch with the present moment by being caught up in concepts about the past and future.

I correlate the ACT process of contact with the present moment with the early Buddhist yogic teachings on the four establishments of mindfulness (*satipatthana*). I present the framework of *satipatthana* as a contemplative home base for a person to use to come into contact with the present moment. For the first establishment of the body (*kaya*) I teach mindfulness of breathing and mindfulness of body sensations as the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water that are experienced as contact between the six sense bases and six sense objects. For the second establishment of sensation (*vedana*) I teach mindfulness of sensations as pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral that arise from the sensory contact. I also teach that when a person experiences an emotion, I invite them to get in touch with how they experience that emotion as sensation in the body and whether it is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. For the third establishment of heart-mind (*citta*) I teach the person to become aware of awareness itself and whether thoughts or other mental phenomena are occurring within that awareness or not. In the case of emotion, I teach the person to become aware of the cognitive narrative or stance associated with the emotion. For the fourth establishment of *Dhamma* I teach how to contextualize the experience of the previous three establishments within the links of dependent origination and the Four Noble Truths. For the flipside of *satipatthana* I teach the person to learn how to recognize when they have lost touch with the four establishments of mindfulness and how to return. As this practice of return relates more directly with other ACT processes, I will delve more fully into this subject of return there.

Another ACT process is “Acceptance” which Harris summarizes as “Open Up.”<sup>11</sup> The flipside is “Experiential Avoidance.”<sup>12</sup> Acceptance means being able to accept whatever sensation, emotion, or cognitive pattern that may be arising in one’s awareness. Experiential avoidance means trying to avoid or get rid of experiencing a sensation, emotion, or cognitive pattern. Since accepting cognitive patterns has more to do with the ACT process of “Cognitive Defusion” I will save discussion of accepting cognitive patterns for the discussion of that process. Therefore, when I teach the ACT process of acceptance, I am mainly teaching the practice of accepting sensations and emotions. When I teach what experiential avoidance is I mainly teach that it means avoidance of sensations and emotions.

I correlate the ACT process of acceptance with links five through nine of the 12 link chain of dependent origination and the practice of the first two establishments of mindfulness. Those five links are sensory contact (*phassa*), sensation (*vedana*), craving (*tanha*), grasping (*upadana*), and becoming (*bhava*). I first present these links as a neutral behavioral chain of phenomenological experience. I therefore rephrase these links as sensory contact (*phassa*), sensation (*vedana*), intention/emotion (*sankhara*), action (*kamma*), and embodied result of intentional action, i.e., becoming (*bhava*). If a person is having trouble accepting painful sensations, I will first teach them to focus on an area in their body or in their sensory environment where the sensations are neutral to pleasant. I will then teach them to move their awareness towards the painful sensation just a little bit until they start to feel a little bit of unpleasant sensation. I will then ask them to stay with that sensation for a little bit. I will then teach them to return their awareness to the place of neutral to pleasant sensation. This process is repeated until there is ability to accept the sensation as it without trying to change it.

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<sup>11</sup> Harris, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Harris, 32.

If a person is having difficulty accepting a painful emotion, I will first ask them to let me know where in general they feel the emotion in their body. Then I will ask what the gist of the cognitive narrative is that goes with the emotion. I will then ask them to set the cognitive narrative aside and work with the sensations of the emotion in the same way as if they were just working with painful sensation described above. The goal is to support the person to reach a place of awareness of and equanimity towards the body sensation associated with the emotion and to not be caught up in rumination related to the emotion. In other words, the goal is to be able to accept the sensation (*vedana*) and or the intention/emotion (*sankhara*) as it is.

In actual practice, I may teach these five links of dependent origination and the practice of accepting body sensation and emotion informally through establishing attunement with a counselee and just talking about what is going on for them. If a difficult sensation or emotion comes up, I may just ask them where they feel it in their body and to breathe with it for a few moments before continuing to engage in conversation. In general, I would try to steer the conversation in the direction of them accepting their sensations and emotions. If the sensations and or emotions are particularly intense, if they become overwhelmed and act out through obsessive discussion or over-expression of unwholesome emotion, and or if they are interested in learning more directly the Buddhist practices I teach, then I will switch into a more formal way of teaching them to work with sensations and emotions. This usually involves mindfulness of breathing, then mindfulness of sensations as the four elements, then mindfulness of sensation as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral using the SE techniques of resourcing, pendulation, and titration.

Another ACT process is “Cognitive Defusion” which Harris summarizes as “Watch Your Thinking.”<sup>13</sup> The flipside is “Cognitive Fusion.”<sup>14</sup> Basically cognitive defusion means being able

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<sup>13</sup> Harris, 15.

<sup>14</sup> Harris, 32.

to be aware of a thought occurring in one's awareness without identifying with it or buying into it. Identifying with it and buying into it is cognitive fusion. ACT uses mindfulness practice and strategic use of language to teach cognitive fusion. Through mindfulness practice one develops metacognitive awareness and so can simply notice the difference between being aware of a thought versus thinking a thought. Language is another strategy where the therapist will mirror back to the client a thought they have expressed by stating "so you are having the thought such and such right now." Or the therapist may teach the client to use that reflective language to say to themselves "I am having the thought such and such right now." Then the therapist will ask the client if that thought is working for them or not in terms of achieving their goals. The therapist will tend not to try and get involved in the content of the thought to prove its accuracy or not as is done in CBT.

In terms of Buddhist theory, I correlate the ACT process of cognitive defusion with the first three links of the 12 links of dependent origination, namely ignorance (*avijjā*), volition (*sankhara*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). In terms of practice, I correlate cognitive defusion with mindfulness of the heart-mind (*citta*) as the third establishment of mindfulness. In more neutral terms I teach the first three links as mindfulness of the heart-mind (*cittanupassana*), mindfulness of movement of the heart-mind as volition (*sankhara*), and mindfulness of identification with one of the six consciousnesses (*viññāṇa*) of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, or thinking. In this particular case of ACT cognitive defusion versus cognitive fusion, awareness of the three links is awareness of the heart-mind, awareness of an intention/emotion arising in the heart-mind, and then that leading to either being aware of a thought or of being carried away by a thought. The former is cognitive defusion, the latter is cognitive fusion.

Another ACT process is “Self as Context” which Harris summarizes as “Pure Awareness.”<sup>15</sup> The flipside is “Attachment to the Conceptualized Self.”<sup>16</sup> Attachment to the conceptualized self is a specific type of cognitive fusion. It is identification with a thought about the self as opposed to a general thought. ACT teaches to first become aware of identifying with a concept of self, then to become aware of the witnessing or observing self that is just aware of different phenomena arising and passing in awareness. Then at an even deeper level one becomes aware of awareness itself as a non-dual ground of being that cannot become an object of awareness or identified with as a subject of awareness. The general idea for this process is to become aware of when one is identifying with a concept of who they think they are, whether positive, negative, or neutral, and to realize that that is just a moment of identification and not who one truly is on a deeper level.

I correlate the ACT process of self as context with the Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses and Buddha Nature. I teach people that they are made up of their body, sensations, emotions, perceptions, thoughts, sensory awareness, and awareness itself. I teach that all of these conditioned phenomena arise from their store consciousness. In terms of their overall phenomenological field of experience I invite them to become attuned to their experience of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking, and having a sense of being a separate self. I teach them that they can have memories that arise from their store consciousness that are experienced as sensation, emotion, and or mental images without a cognitive narrative that goes with it. I also teach them that they can have memories that include these phenomena as well as a cognitive narrative. I teach them that their mind consciousness is like a farmer and that their store consciousness is like a field. I teach them that through the practice of right effort and right

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<sup>15</sup> Harris, 15.

<sup>16</sup> Harris, 32.

mindfulness that they can cultivate wholesome states of body and mind and that they can embrace and transform unwholesome states of body and mind. I teach them that this is an organic process in which they make effort with their mind consciousness and in which they also allow their store consciousness to do its work in the same way a farmer allows the soil, sunshine, and water to do its work. I teach them that their ultimate or true nature is Buddha Nature which is the non-dual ground of being and the source of goodness and happiness within them.

Another ACT process is “Values” which Harris summarizes as “Know What Matters.”<sup>17</sup> The flipside is “Lack of Values, Clarity/Contact.”<sup>18</sup> In ACT the therapist works with the client to find out what areas of life are important to the client and give the client a sense of meaning and purpose. Typically, these involve life areas such as family, relationship, education, career, health, recreation/creativity, religion/spirituality, and volunteer work. The therapist works with the client to find out what their ideals are in these type of life areas. As will be discussed below, the ACT process of “Committed Action” is about the client being able to take action on behalf of their values or not. Discussion of values also involves helping the client find the right balance between their values in terms of the level of priority they give to each of them and how they interrelate with each other. The flipside of values is not having values, i.e., not being clear about what one’s values are, or not being in touch with what one’s values are. As a result, the person does not have a sense of meaning or purpose in their life that can give them overall direction in their actions.

I correlate the ACT process of values with the teachings attributed to the Buddha on happiness from the Discourse on Happiness (*Khp5 Mangala Sutta*) in the *Khuddaka Nikāya* from the Pali Canon. That discourse can be seen as providing a list of traditional Buddhist values. I also draw from a traditional set of four categories of values known as the “four aims of life” (Skt

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<sup>17</sup> Harris, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Harris, 32.

*purushartha*) from the Vedic culture that, along with early Buddhism, was part of the Mauryan Empire in India.<sup>19</sup> A paraphrased articulation of the values from the *Mangala Sutta*<sup>20</sup> are to:

- Keep good company
- Live in a good setting
- Be skilled in a trade and be well spoken
- Take care of family
- Help extended family and friends when in need
- Do not abuse substances
- Listen to the Dhamma
- Discuss the Dhamma
- Spend time with monks and nuns and make offerings to them if possible
- Eventually in one's future lifetimes become a monk or nun
- Practice the Eightfold Path as a monk or nun and realize *nibbana*

This list of values can be seen as the ideal Buddhist ecosystem of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen whose karmic trajectories are seen to be interwoven and taking place over multiple lifetimes. The Vedic categories of values are “Dharma” which means one's duties or responsibilities, “*Artha*” which means accumulating enough wealth to make a living, “*Kama*” which the cultivation of pleasure through sexuality, and “*Moksha*” which means spiritual liberation. I also include the Buddhist teachings on taking refuge in the Three Jewels of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha and on having an understanding of the Four Noble Truths that is appropriate to one's level of practice as a lay or monastic practitioner. I compare these with the usual areas that ACT focuses on for values for counselees to have a variety of traditional religious and contemporary secular areas of life to choose from.

Another ACT process, and the sixth of the six discussed so far, is “Committed Action” which Harris summarizes as “Do What It Takes.”<sup>21</sup> The flipside is “Unworkable Action,” which

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<sup>19</sup> “Purushartha: The 4 Aims of Human Life,” Chopra, January 5, 2019, <https://chopra.com/articles/purushartha-the-4-aims-of-human-life>.

<sup>20</sup> Shakyamuni Buddha, “Mangala Sutta: Blessings,” trans. Thera Narada, accessed January 24, 2018, <https://www.accesstinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/khp/khp.5.nara.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Harris, 15.

means action that goes against a person's values or the inability to take action on behalf of one's values.<sup>22</sup> ACT tries to frame actions as either working for a person in terms of their values or not working for a person in terms of their values. It tries to avoid labeling actions "good" or "bad." An ACT therapist will try to support a person to recognize what patterns of actions the person is already engaged in that are on behalf of the person's values. The therapist will try to support the person to make small single actions on values that have not developed into a full habitual pattern yet. The therapist will try to do the opposite when it comes to unworkable patterns of actions. Confronting patterns of action can bring up intense sensations, emotions, cognitive patterns, and beliefs about self which means engaging in a rhythm of talking about actions and practicing acceptance, cognitive defusion, and self as context based on contact with the present moment.

I correlate the act process of committed action with the Buddhist teaching on cause and effect (Pali *kamma* Skt *karma*) via the links of dependent origination. To make the discussion concrete I focus on a person's actions in relation to the five precepts. I teach the five precepts as zones of action where there can be significant happiness or suffering generated. Thus, there is focus on actions related to killing vs preserving life, stealing vs generosity, sexual misconduct vs appropriate sexual conduct, false or harmful speech vs loving and constructive speech, and abuse of substances vs responsible use of substances. I also focus on the values of the Discourse on Happiness, the typical ACT values, and the Vedic four aims of life in terms of whether a person is able to take action on these values or not. In terms of trauma, I focus on whether a person has broken one or more of the five precepts or had one or more of the five precepts broken against them as one way to assess for trauma and how that may relate to a person's patterns of action. I also make use of Daoist yogic teachings on nutritive essence (*jing*), breath energy (*qi*), and heart-

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<sup>22</sup> Harris, 32.

mind or spirit (*shen*) to assess whether a person's patterns of actions are nourishing or causing suffering. Focusing on *jing* means focusing on exercise, sleep, nutrition, and sexual practice. Focusing on *qi* means focusing on mindfulness of breathing and mindfulness of emotions as body sensations so that a person can have greater capacity to be with emotions and choose which ones to act on and which ones to calm and let go back down. Focusing on *shen* means supporting the person to have regular times in their lives when they are able to be in the present moment and not be focused on conceptual thoughts. If a person has intense rumination, then I add more detail and structure to that practice.

Because talking about committed actions can bring up deep mental formations from a person's store consciousness that have to do with past conditioning, there can be a shifting back and forth between talking about actions and practicing mindfulness of sensations, emotions, and thought patterns in order to be with intense sensations and metabolize reactive intention/emotion. There can also be discussion about discerning between reactive intention/emotion that seems to be related to the present action versus being related to something from the past. If a person wants to engage in Buddhist practice as a Buddhist, I will explore whether they are interested in engaging in the practices of taking refuge in the Three Jewels and committing to keeping the five precepts. I will also explore finding out if they want to practice with other Buddhists and, if so, what tradition might be a good fit for them.

### **Future Areas of Research**

One of the main focuses of this dissertation has been to distinguish between early Buddhist yogic theory and practice and later Buddhist scholastic theory and practice. This discernment is based in large part on the research of Thai Forest monks Ajhan Sujato and

Thanissaro Bhikkhu who have recovered early Buddhist theory and practice based on their analysis of canonical texts and their participation in Thai Forest monastic lineages of practice. The oral tradition of early Buddhism in Greater Magadah, its spread through India via the Mauryan Empire, and its canonization into the Pali *Samyutta Nikaya* and Sanskrit *Samyukta Nikaya* provides a solid basis of material to explore further. I see this as the need to define more clearly what the early Buddhist yogic mode of knowledge production was.

Religious studies scholar Hal Roth has made a similar distinguishment between an early Daoist yogic tradition of theory and practice and a later Daoist scholastic tradition of theory and practice in what is now China.<sup>23</sup> The earlier mode, like early Buddhism, was an oral tradition that focused on body posture, breath energy, the heart-mind, and a formless mysticism.<sup>24</sup> This Daoist yogic theory and practice continued as different Daoist traditions of internal alchemy. This Daoist yogic theory and practice also cross fertilized with Chan Buddhist traditions of theory and practice. Within India the eight-limb yoga (Skt *Ashtanga Yoga*) of Patanjali emerged. It too focused on body posture, breath energy, the heart-mind, and formless mysticism.<sup>25</sup> I am interested in comparing these yogic traditions of theory and practice based on the hypothesis that they share a similar “three one” contemplative structure that, by comparing, may reveal in more detail how these yogic traditions work.

Early Buddhism has *satipatthana* as a yogic structure of the body, sensation, the heart-mind, and realization of nibbana. It has *anapanasati samadhi* as a breath and body-based practice progression that involves ecstatic and blissful meditative states. Daoist Internal Alchemy has the yogic structure of nutritive essence (*jing*), breath energy (*qi*), the heart-mind (*shen*), and

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<sup>23</sup> Harold Roth, *Original Tao: Inward Training* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004), 11-34.

<sup>24</sup> Harold Roth, p.99-124.

<sup>25</sup> Iyengar, B. K. S, *Core of the Yoga Sutras* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 127-184.

realization of the Dao.<sup>26</sup> It has a progression of practice that involves nourishing the *jing* and sublimating it into the *qi*, nourishing the *qi* and sublimating it into the *shen*, and nourishing the *shen* and sublimating it into the Dao.<sup>27</sup> Chan Buddhism also makes use of posture, breath energy, and the heart-mind, and makes use of *hua tou* to investigate the source of awareness in order to realize Buddha Nature.<sup>28</sup> *Ashtanga Yoga* engages in posture practice (*asana*), breath control (*pranayama*), concentration of the heart-mind (*citta*), and realization of the Self (*purusha*). A comparison of these different Asian yogic traditions could further reveal the existence of a yogic mode of knowledge production that should be seen as distinct from clerical scholastic and modern scientific scholastic modes of knowledge production.

I am interested in learning more about what the religious life of the culture in northeast India was like before its second urbanization and the rise of the city-state mode of knowledge production that gave rise to Buddhism and Jainism. I am also interested in comparing the early Buddhist yogic mode of knowledge production with different indigenous village-shamanic traditions of religious theory and practice. My sense is that because early Buddhism was an oral tradition and because it was a body-centered tradition, it may have many elements that are more in common with early village-based shamanic traditions of religious theory and practice than it does with later Buddhist scholastic traditions of theory and practice. For example, in the Lakota culture of North America the story of how the Sacred Buffalo Calf Women gave the Lakota people the sacred pipe seems to carry within it a teaching that can be explained by the links of dependent origination. According to the traditional story, one day two warrior men were out

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<sup>26</sup> John Blofeld, *Taoism: The Road to Immortality* (Shambhala, 2000), chap. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Blofeld, chap. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Shodo Harada Roshi, *The Path to Bodhidharma: The Teachings of Shodo Harada Roshi*, ed. Jane Lago, trans. Priscilla Daichi Storandt (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2000).

hunting some distance away from the village encampment of tipis. According to Lakota Medicine Man Black Elk,

They saw in the distance something coming towards them in a very strange and wonderful manner. When this mysterious thing came nearer to them, they saw it was a very beautiful woman, dressed in white buckskin, and bearing a bundle on her back. Now this woman was so good to look at that one of the Lakota had bad intentions and told his friend of his desire, but this good man said that he must not have such thoughts, for surely this is a *wakan* [holy] woman. The mysterious person was now very close to the men, and then putting down her bundle, she asked the one with the bad intentions to come over to her. As the young man approached the mysterious woman, they were both covered by a great cloud, and soon when it lifted the sacred woman was standing there, and at her feet was the man with bad thoughts who was now nothing but bones, and terrible snakes were eating him.<sup>29</sup>

The White Buffalo Calf Woman then told the good man to go back to the village encampment and tell his people that she was coming to offer them a gift and give them a sacred teaching.

When she arrived, she gave the chief of the village a sacred pipe that was to be used by the people to pray with and to connect to the Great Spirit and the spirit world. No one who was impure, i.e., had acted in a bad way such as breaking the rules of ethical conduct, could be allowed to smoke the pipe. I see this as a deep teaching on the links of dependent origination related to ethical conduct of a community, connection to supernatural beings, and connection to a spiritual ground of being. I also see it as a recognition of a continuum of erotic experience that ranges from regular sexual desire to the experience of a holy spirituality that requires a different set of erotic rules to relate to.

In his autobiography African shaman Malidoma Some from Burkina Faso tells of a similar story in which he encounters a feminine tree spirit.<sup>30</sup> He has sexual desire arise in him when he sees her. He realizes that that desire is inappropriate and so does not identify with it or

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<sup>29</sup> Black Elk, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, ed. Joseph Epes Brown (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), chap. 1, Kindle.

<sup>30</sup> Malidoma Patrice Somé, *Of Water and the Spirit: Ritual, Magic and Initiation in the Life of an African Shaman* (London: Penguin Books, 1995), chap. 17.

act on it. This leads to him experiencing a spiritual and blissful merging with the tree spirit that is reminiscent of what the Buddha describes as spiritual happiness that occurs in the *jhanas*. In the Lakota practice of the sweat lodge practitioners sit in a dome shaped tent made of tree branches and animal skins.<sup>31</sup> The tent is dark inside except for glowing red rocks that are brought in from a fire near the lodge. Fragrant herbs are burned on the rocks and water is poured on the rocks to create steam in the lodge. Practitioners are taught to open up to the experience of the four elements in their body and in the environment around them. The intense heat of the lodge requires a practice of being aware of body sensations and developing equanimity towards those body sensations. Prayers are spoken and chanted to connect to a greater spiritual context. In both these examples, the links of dependent origination can be seen as a primal phenomenological rhythm that can be used to interpret the experience. In the case of the sweat lodge the practice of meditating on body sensations and the four elements and the practice of cultivating awareness and equanimity towards body sensations is reminiscent of GV theory and practice and the Ledi Vipassana lineage.

## Concluding Remarks

This dissertation has shown that the hermeneutic trend in the scholarly dialogue between Buddhism and trauma therapy has been to import theory and practice from the later Buddhist scholastic mode of knowledge production into the modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production. Early Buddhist yogic theory and practice has been imported as well but its sources have been hidden or simply not known about. This dissertation argues that there should be research projects in which the hermeneutic trend is reversed. The theory and practice

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<sup>31</sup> Black Elk, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*, ed. Joseph Epes Brown (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), chap. 3, Kindle.

of somatic trauma therapy and relational depth psychology should be imported into later Buddhist scholastic and early Buddhist yogic modes of knowledge production that are maintained by living traditions of Buddhist religious theory and practice. Buddhist scholar practitioners should explore comparing different yogic traditions of theory and practice within Buddhism and outside of Buddhism. In addition, Buddhist scholar practitioners should compare Buddhist yogic traditions of theory and practice with different indigenous shamanic traditions of theory and practice. The goal should be a deep integration of the different modes of knowledge production for the purpose of human and non-human planetary flourishing that recognizes shamanic and yogic worldviews and that is able to recognize and respond to all four levels of trauma.

Ideally a global society could be created in which our education systems and healthcare systems can make interpersonal trauma something that is rare instead of something that is common and widespread. In addition, we need a global society that has a robust way of responding to the traumas of natural disasters and violent accidents that will still keep occurring. Indigenous shamanic and yogic traditions of theory and practice should be looked to to form the basis of such a society. To the degree that such societies may contain elements of racism, sexism, homophobia, or ableism those patterns of behavior should be challenged. But it should not be taken as a given that it has only been with the emergence of postmodern queer feminist thought based on the modern scientific scholastic mode of knowledge production that humans on planet Earth have recognized such forms of oppression. Members of the Native American women's liberation movement have made persuasive arguments that widespread intergenerational interpersonal trauma in many, if not the majority, of Native American communities on Turtle

Island came with European settler colonialism.<sup>32</sup> The discovery by Freud of widespread abuse of girls and women in Europe should not be seen as a universal doctrine of discovery applicable to the entire human race. It should be seen as a discovery of widespread trauma within Western Europe as a potential legacy of Greco-Roman imperialism and the industrialization of European society. More research needs to be done on a global scale to fully understand the history of trauma on Planet Earth and how to respond to it.

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<sup>32</sup> Sarah Deer, Bonnie Clairmont, Carrie A. Martell, Maureen L. White Eagle, *Sharing Our Stories of Survival: Native Women Surviving Violence* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007); Sarah Deer, *The Beginning and End of Rape: Confronting Sexual Violence in Native America* (Minneapolis MN: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2015); Jacqueline Agtuca, *Safety for Native Women: VAWA and American Indian Tribes*, ed. Dorma Sahneyah (Los Angeles CA: National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, 2015).

*Appendix*

**A Prototype of Buddhist Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**

<b>Buddhist ACT Prototype</b>	
ACT Process and Flipside	Contact with the Present Moment Lost in Concepts of Past and Future
Buddhist Theory and Practice	Four Establishments of Mindfulness Body as Four Elements Sensations as pleasant, unpleasant neutral Awareness of heart-mind Awareness of Four Noble Truths
Buddhist Textual Resources	<i>satipatthanasamyutta</i> (SN 47)
ACT Process and Flipside	Acceptance vs Experiential Avoidance
Buddhist Theory and Practice	Links four through nine of the 12 links of dependent origination Mindfulness of body Mindfulness of sensations Mindfulness of mental formations
Buddhist Textual Resources	<i>nidanasamyutta</i> (SN 12) <i>vedanasamyutta</i> (SN 36) <i>anapanasamyutta</i> (SN 54)
ACT Process and Flipside	Cognitive Defusion vs Cognitive Fusion
Buddhist Theory and Practice	Links one through three of the 12 links of dependent origination Mindfulness of heart-mind
Buddhist Textual Resources	<i>nidanasamyutta</i> (SN 12) <i>anapanasamyutta</i> (SN 54)
ACT Process and Flipside	Self as Context vs Self as Concept
Buddhist Theory and Practice	Yogacara teachings on the eight consciousnesses and Buddha Nature

Buddhist Textual Resources	Thrangu Rinpoche, Khenchen. <i>Everyday Consciousness and Primordial Awareness</i> . Edited by Susanne Schefczyk. 3rd Edition edition. Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion, 2011.
ACT Process and Flipside	Values and Lack of Values
Buddhist Theory and Practice	Teachings on Happiness Four Noble Truths Four Aims of Life from Vedic Culture
Buddhist and Vedic Textual Resources	Discourse on Happiness ( <i>Mangala Sutta</i> ) Discourse on Rolling Forth the Wheel of Dhamma ( <i>Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta</i> ) Wikipedia entry on <i>Purushartha</i>
ACT Process and Flipside	Committed Action vs Lack of Committed Action
Buddhist Theory and Practice	Five Precepts Eightfold Path Daoist Internal Alchemy teachings on <i>jing</i> , <i>qi</i> , and <i>shen</i>
Buddhist and Daoist Textual Resources	Hanh, Thich Nhat. <i>Teachings on Love</i> . 2nd edition. Parallax Press, 2002. Blofeld, John. <i>Taoism: The Road to Immortality</i> . Shambhala, 2000.

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